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THE INFLUENCE OF PATER AND MATTHEW ARNOLD IN THE PROSE-WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE

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I wish to acknowledge my obligation for several valuable suggestions to my friends Mr. Robert Ross and Dr. G. E. Fuhrken, as well as to Mr. R. H. Sherard and Lektor C. S. Fearnside.

E. B.

Gothenburg, *January*, 1914.

Introductory.

It is a noteworthy and, to some, an unpalatable fact that for ten years or more the literary renown of Oscar Wilde has been steadily spreading, the true character of his personality and work revealing itself more and more clearly to ever-widening circles of appreciative students. It is beginning to be realized, it seems, that Wilde's contributions to English Letters are, perhaps, the most remarkable furnished by any writer of his generation, with the possible exception of Stevenson, and that he was one of the most brilliantly gifted literary men that England ever produced. No change in the general attitude of men's minds regarding matters of literature can explain this away. On the contrary, the »Aesthetic Movement,» with which Wilde was identified at the outset of his career, has long ceased to be a thing of actual interest; and so, almost, in its turn has that »Decadent School,» whose great literary figure he was to become. Things in him that struck his contemporaries as audaciously »advanced,» and were so no doubt, may now seem a little false and faded. To us of a later generation who take an interest in his writings, this interest is neither a personal one, nor one largely bound up with considerations of »schools» or »movements.» It is an aesthetic interest. In other words, we are beginning to see his work in its true perspective, to form an artistic judgment on it, to apply to it what Matthew Arnold called »the real estimate» of literature, in contradistinction to the »personal» and the »historic» estimate. We are no longer impassioned against the man by the sensational in-

cidents of his life. His crime against Society need only occupy our attention in so far as it influenced his artistic nature. Indeed, hardly anybody now, save those who have cultivated an over-delicacy of sentiment, would care to take offence at the tolerant conceit implied in such terms as a »chronological error» or an »anachronism,» in dealing with one whose fantasy led him to imagine himself living in the Italy of the Renaissance, or in Greece at the time of Socrates. The long years that already separate us from his death have helped to throw into the background all that was ephemeral and unessential in him; and with each year that passes, the essential fact about him stands out more clearly and prominently: that he was a man of supreme literary talent, who wrote wonderful and extraordinary things, and who exercised, and still exercises, and will no doubt continue to exercise for a long time to come, an important intellectual and artistic influence, both in his own country and abroad. Ten years ago, Sir Richard Garnett and Edmund Gosse, in their history of *English Literature* (vol. IV, 1903,) had not a word for Oscar Wilde. Even as late as 1907, another well-known compiler of literary history, either from personal rancour or for some equally cogent reason, could affect a sort of semi-official ignorance of the man who wrote *De Profundis* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. Perhaps the time-limit was reached in 1912 when Andrew Lang, in his *History of English Literature*, a book of nearly 700 pp., still felt justified in ignoring Wilde. This attitude is no longer possible. Ill-will and prejudice have had their day, even among the professional distributors of praise and blame in matters literary. Nobody who would now set forth however bare an outline of the English literature of the last few decades can pretend to know nothing of a man who so effectively summed up and impersonated, in his life and in his writings, some of the vital tendencies of an epoch. Even into the popular

manuals of literary history Oscar Wilde, so long excluded and so rigorously tabooed, is foreing his way at last. Thousands of ordinary readers who were taught to look upon Wilde as merely the infamous central figure in some fearful scandal, will now learn to associate his name with many choice works of art, made accessible to them in cheap editions. It is a significant fact that in one of the latest and most concise of these handbooks, Compton-Rickett's admirable little *History of English Literature*, Pater and Arnold (as critic and prose-writer) are dismissed in six lines each, whereas Wilde alone occupies twenty-six.

The most obvious proof that Wilde's writings are steadily and firmly gaining ground, in and out of England, and are at length receiving their due meed of attention, if not always of competent criticism, is of course the very considerable number of books, pamphlets, and articles published about him within the last ten years or so, in almost every European language. All these productions are utterly heterogeneous in character and value. Most of them are either mere biographical records, or approach the subject in a general and popular sort of way. Only a few are founded on personal recollections. A small number of treatises or magazine articles contain fairly minute analyses of some of his writings, or treat of these from some special or technical point of view. Mr. Sherard's books are universally known and need no further mention here. His great *Life of Oscar Wilde* (1906), though it may not quite satisfy us on all points, still remains our chief source of information concerning the external facts of the poet's life. Stuart Mason's craftsmanlike bibliography of the poems (1907) and his other collectanea are equally well-known to all students. Mr. Robert Ross's Introductions to some of the volumes in Methuen's editions of the works, — those, for instance, in the volumes entitled *Miscellanies* and *Reviews* in the library edition, —

include some important matter and will afford highly suggestive reading. Mr. Arthur Ransome's *Oscar Wilde* (1912), which gave rise to the Douglas libel action, is the one really critical and comprehensive monograph on Wilde that exists, and is simply beyond praise. A brief study by Mr. Arthur Symons, which I know in a French translation only (*Portraits Anglais*, Bruges, 1907), though not very sympathetic in tone, is noteworthy for its delicate analysis of character and well-balanced estimate. Mention should be made also of Mr. Walter Hamilton's *The Aesthetic Movement in England* (3rd ed. 1882), which devotes a whole chapter to Wilde, — probably the first appreciative study of him that appeared in print. Some other books on Wilde published during the last few years in England are mostly made up of a few trifling anecdotes or scraps of personal reminiscences, and offer little of interest beyond what is already generally known. The articles or essays by André Gide, Ernest La Jeunesse, and Henri de Régnier (partly reprinted in book-form) are all most interesting, being from the pens of distinguished writers who had some personal acquaintance with the poet. As for the Germans, it is well known that, in true accordance with their fine spirit of intellectual hospitality, they were practically the first to recognize Wilde's genius, his writings finding generous acceptance among them, and this at a time when in his own country but few ventured to manifest an interest in his works. On the other hand, the Germans would, perhaps, seem temperamentally not over-well capacitated for a really intimate and subtle valuation of a writer of such an extravagant type. Most German books or pamphlets on Wilde, will, in fact, be found deficient in the finer shades of sympathy and intuition, and, lacking any literary qualities of their own, have not much in them to attract foreign readers. However, there are exceptions. A study by Carl Hagemann, *Oscar Wilde: Studien zur modernen Welt*

literatur (1904), is decidedly good, and so is an article by Helene Richter in *Englische Studien* (1912), »Oscar Wildes künstlerische Persönlichkeit.» D. Bock's treatise, *Walter Pater's Einfluss auf Oscar Wilde* (1913), too, must be called a clever and painstaking piece of work.

The present study comprises nothing of a purely biographical nature: the main incidents of Wilde's life and his literary career are supposed to be fairly well known to the reader. It deals with the works only, and with these within strictly defined limits, and from a special point of view. However, in tracing the influence of Pater and Matthew Arnold in some of Wilde's prose-writings, I have tried to make of the following pages something more than a mere catalogue of parallels and phrases borrowed or echoed, a compilation of that kind being perfectly lifeless and uninteresting. I have considered the works with reference to the man, and have sought, behind the fixed symbol of the written word, to espy the restless and living personality. In each instance recorded here of a likeness or difference of literary manner, I have tried to establish the obvious or hidden connection with the underlying affinity or dissimilarity of mind and temperament. I may thus venture to say that, although what follows is primarily and chiefly a comparative study in style, I have furnished a few contributions to the general psychology of Wilde, the man and the artist, and that I have thrown some little sidelight on matters that do not, very strictly speaking, come under the title I have chosen for my work. I have made a point of distinguishing and marking off the typical and the striking, leaving out, as a rule, what seemed to me of merely secondary importance. The quotations are given in as little mutilated shape as possible, brief ones (where a choice was possible) in preference to longer ones. Whenever an occasion offered to reproduce passages that, besides being instances in point.

were fine specimens of prose, I have availed myself of it.

Now for a word or two in justification of the subject itself. There is nothing, it seems to me, illegitimate or futile in minutely analysing the language of an individual writer, not from the point of view of the mere philologist, nor from that of the literary or philosophic critic only, but from one that combines both of these, i. e. analysing in it its character of an individual creation, *as style*, analysing it with regard to the use he, the writer, has made of it, both as a vehicle of thought and as a medium for producing certain artistic effects, as distinct from the methods and workmanship of any other writer in the same language. As far as older writers are concerned, such a study is made hazardous and difficult by the fact that, in the case of a great many words and idioms, we can make hardly more than a rough guess as to what may have been their precise import at any definite epoch in times gone by, while of their subtler connotations and more elusive shades of meaning we are, of course, more hopelessly ignorant still. The amount of philosophical acumen implied in the study of many an early writer would seem almost to exclude, in latter-day readers, the capacity for a synthetic apprehension and imaginative enjoyment of his work, our reasons for valuing which, it is not fanciful to say, may be but remotely connected with any conscious motive or meaning on *his* part. With a living or recent author, or one who is severed from us by the space of but a few generations, this difficulty exists no longer, or does not exist in the same measure. The material he works in, refining and moulding it to his intention, in pursuit of some definite artistic ideal, serves our own coarser and commonplace purposes, is still »the dialect of life;» and we, and none but we, products of the same age, can appreciate the effectiveness of his manipulation, as determined by the

actual circumstances of his work. Nor is this all. An author's style being reflective, more or less clearly, of his habits of mind and his temperament, it is imperative, if we are to get at the *soul* of a contemporary writer, and sympathetically realize what is discriminative and novel about him, to make a detailed study of his style and his methods.

Now, as to whether we examine a man's style in itself, without comparing it with any one else's, unless by implication, or if we study it in its relationship with the style of some other writer or writers, as moulded upon or influenced by it, is, of course, simply a question of expediency. We are not always able in our analysis of a writer's output to exhibit, in all its stages, the influence of some one else's thought or manner, to find for it the adequate terms of description, the definition that will satisfy our claims on precision and clearness. In some authors, though potent enough, and though we may be quite well aware of it, it somehow eludes our grasp by a something fluent, or vague, or inarticulate. Not so with the writer who forms the subject of this treatise. Not only was Wilde, of all recent writers of any fame or importance, as far as I know, the one most liable to influences; but these influences, however deftly assimilated, in some respects, often lie bare to the eye, and in the majority of cases are easily traceable. If, then, in essaying a study on Wilde as a prose-author, I have decided for the latter of the two above alternatives, I am merely conforming to what suggestions as to the best way of approaching the subject seemed to be implied in the nature of the thing itself. I have chosen to write of Wilde from the point of view of his literary relationship with two other men of letters whose influence is reflected throughout his work, because it seemed to me that any estimate of Wilde that should disregard

this relationship would fall short of historical accuracy no less than of commonplace fact.

What has been attempted in the present little work for Pater and for Matthew Arnold, might be done, I need hardly say, for at least a dozen other writers, English and foreign; and in the case of one or two, would prove to be a hardly less interesting task. I have brought together, in the pages immediately following, a few notes and instances with a view to showing how numerous and varied these influences were, and how we may note the indication of them everywhere in Wilde's writings.

Like every English author (except those of the 18th century) Wilde was influenced by the Bible, having been educated like most other Protestants, and saturated with the Bible and its phraseology. The influence of the Bible is traceable both in his diction and in his extreme fondness for the device of parallelism so frequent in Hebrew poetry. His prose abounds in scriptural allusions and quotations. Take the very last paragraph of *De Profundis*, — a mere contexture of Biblical phrases! When he says of his own name somewhere in the same work, — »I had made it a low byword among low people. I had dragged it through the very mire. I had given it to brutes that they might make it brutal, and to fools that they might turn it into a synonym for folly,» he makes this terrible self-accusation doubly terrible by adopting the style and cadences of the Book that contains the most passionate indictments and the most dreadful invectives ever penned. Everywhere, little touches remind us of the fervour of the Psalms, of the glow and colour of the Song of Solomon, of the sweetness and simplicity of the Gospels. »That something hidden away in my nature, like a treasure in a field, is Humility.» (*De Profundis*). »Such things are less than the yellow trumpet of one daffodil of the field, far less than the meanest of the visible arts.» (*Inten-*

tions). »And when Avarice saw that a third of the multitude was dead she beat her breast and wept. She beat her barren bosom, and cried aloud.» (*A House of Pomegranates*). »The dead staff blossomed, and bare lilies that were whiter than pearls. The dry thorn blossomed, and bare roses that were redder than rubies. Whiter than fine pearls were the lilies, and their stems were of bright silver. Redder than male rubies were the roses, and their leaves were of beaten gold.» (*Ibid.*). »And when the third year was over, and on a day that was a holy day, the Priest went up to the chapel, that he might show to the people the wounds of the Lord, and speak to them about the wrath of God.» (*Ibid.*).

As for the Classics, we might safely conclude *a priori* that one who at the age of seventeen won a Gold Medal for Greek (at Trinity College, Dublin, his prize-essay being on the Greek Comic Poets), and who enjoyed later several scholastic distinctions of a similar kind, would always retain something of this classical erudition. In fact, all Wilde's writings are permeated with the spirit and influence of the Classics (among whom Theocritus and Plato would seem to have been his favourites in later life). — Of the English poets, nearly all the greatest have left their mark in his works, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton being obvious influences, partly, no doubt, through the medium of Keats, from whom probably he derived more than from any other poet, ancient or modern, with the single exception of Swinburne. An admirable passage in a letter to Mr. Ross, inserted in the *De Profundis* volume, — »On the other side of the prison wall there are some poor black soot-besmirched trees that are just breaking out into buds of an almost shrill green. I know quite well what they are going through. They are finding expression.» — reminds us that Keats used to say that poetry should come naturally, »as leaves to a tree.» Of Swinburne there is a great deal, both in style and attitude.

The tinge of political and religious radicalism of his earlier years, his admiration of Mazzini, etc., are doubtless due, in a great measure, to the example of Swinburne. Swinburne, too, is responsible for not a few literary flaws in Wilde's works, — a certain flatulence and emptiness of expression, the excessive use of alliteration and assonance, and, generally, of words and phrases for their mere sound. Among the other 19th century poets, Tennyson must be mentioned in the first place; in most of the earlier poems his influence is strongly marked. Nor should Browning be forgotten. Of William Morris there is a faint echo in the early poems. Thus in the poem »In the Gold Room,« the first stanza suggests, both in rhyme and metre, in the phrasing of one or two lines, and, to some extent, in its tone of feeling, the corresponding stanza in Morris's »The Blue Closet.«

Among the poets of America, there was at least one whom Wilde admired. Poe, that consummate master in the weirdly suggestive, that subtle dealer in the morbid and the macabre, could not fail to attract and fascinate a temperament like Wilde's. Poe's influence was one rather of tone and atmosphere than of literary technique. There is a great deal of the former and just a little of the latter in *The Sphinx*, of which we need only call to mind the following two stanzas to realize how much he was indebted for inspiration to »that supreme imaginative work which we know by the name of *The Raven*,« —

In a dim corner of my room for longer than
my fancy thinks

A beautiful and silent Sphinx has watched me
through the shifting gloom.

.

What songless tongueless ghost of sin crept
through the curtains of the night,

And saw my taper burning bright, and knocked,
and bade you enter in?¹⁾

Among the English prose-writers, Ruskin and Swinburne are the predominant influences (with Pater and Arnold, of whom nothing need be said here). The main impetus of Ruskin's influence came during Wilde's stay at the University, as clearly shown by the character of his earlier prose. Whatever elements of Ruskinian influence may be traceable in Wilde's later work have much less of actuality, and probably in most cases are too deeply ingrained in its very fabric and framework to be susceptible of analysis. Years later, in »The Critic as Artist,» in a passage very aptly suggestive, in its complex rhythmical effects, of Ruskin himself, Wilde paid a magnificent homage to that »mighty and majestic prose» which, though still admiring, he no longer imitated. The influence of Swinburne, dating equally far back, maintained itself longer, it seems, as an active and effective agent. Wilde's criticism, from his first lectures and reviews down to *Intentions*, has frequent reference to Swinburne, as the following parallels will show: —

Swinburne.

We must all hope that the poet will keep to this clear air of the ancient heights, more natural and wholesome for the spirit than the lowlands of depression and dubiety . . . Above these levels the

Wilde.

. . . the valley perilous where ignorant armies clash by night²⁾ being no dwelling-place meet for her to whom the gods have assigned the fresh uplands and

¹⁾ For the metre of the poem, cf. Tennyson's »In Memoriam.»

²⁾ A quotation from Arnold's »Dover Beach.»

sunnier fields and fresher uplands lie wide and warm . . . (*Essays and Studies*).

The buoyant beauty of surrounding verse . . . can no more be shown by process of selection than any shallow salt pool left in the sand for sunbeams to drain dry can show the depth and length of the receding tide. (*Ibid.*).

There are two things which most men begin by hating until they have won their way . . . : perfection of work, and personality in the workman. . . . more than any other he unites personality and perfection . . . (*Ibid.*).

To throw away the natural grace of rhyme from a modern song is a wilful abdication of half the power and half the charm of verse. (*Ibid.*).

sunny heights and clear, untroubled air. (*Essays and Lectures*).

As little should you judge of the strength and splendour of sun or sea by the dust that dances in the beam, or the bubble that breaks on the wave, as take your critic for any sane test of art. (*Ibid.*).

I call him a great actor because he brings to the interpretation of a work of art the two qualities which we in this century so much desire, the qualities of personality and of perfection. (In a Review of 1885).

. . . in his constant rejection of rhyme, Mr. Henley seems to me to have abdicated half his power. (In a Review of 1888).

In reading it we seem rapt into that paradise revealed to Swedenborg . . . (*Ibid.*). . . the monstrous Heaven itself that was revealed to Swedenborg's blinded eyes. (*Intentions*).

Wilde's phrasing very often suggests the somewhat bombastic and florid manner of Swinburne: — »a perfect precision and choice of language, a style flawless and fearless, » — »the flawless beauty and perfect form of its expression, » — »its most complete and flawless realisation, » — »Sati: e, always as sterile as it is shameful and as impotent as it is insolent, » — »the delightful and technical sphere of language, » — »his fine sense of distinction and sure instinct of delicate refinement, » and so on. Cf. Swinburne: — »the sudden and sensitive intuition of an innate instinct, » — »the faultless and fervent melodies of Tennyson, » — »almost as blameless as they are brilliant, » — »nearly infallible in its exquisite and subtle delicacy, » — »ineffable effect of indefinable sweetness, » — »matchless grace of unapproachable beauty, » — »the perfect clearness and competence of words, » — »the matchless force and charm of his most pure and perfect eloquence, » etc.

It remains to say a few words of certain foreign authors, mostly French, without a mention of whom this catalogue, incomplete as it is, would be all too summary. In the case of two at least of these latter, even a slight acquaintance with Wilde's works will make it clear that he owed as much to them as to any English writer, with the exceptions that are obvious. With that »most subtle of all modern critics, most fascinating of all modern poets, » with Gautier, he shared the fundamental conception of art as a world wholly separate from that of actual existence, — the doctrine of »art for art's sake. » He was one with Gautier in the demand for technical perfection and an adequate use of the artist's material, in the value he lays on firm execution and strict

rules of workmanship. In his poem »Symphony in Yellow,» he aimed at a somewhat similar effect to that produced by the device of repetition in Gautier's »Symphonie en Blanc Majeur,» that »flawless masterpiece of colour and music,» as he called it. Still closer, perhaps, was his intellectual affinity with another great Frenchman, — Baudelaire. That extremely artistic personality, with its intensified individualism, its ardent temperament, seems from the first to have fascinated him. Probably few things in Literature did as subtly modify Wilde's outlook upon life and the imaginative colouring of his work, as those »Flowers of Evil» whose »poisonous honey» he delighted to feed upon. In »The Critic as Artist,» he analyses his sensations of that haunting and heavy-scented poetry, so perfect and powerful in its sustained note of passion, and tells us what a wonderfully complex thing those sensations are. Writing from prison to Mr. Ross, he says, alluding to Stevenson in Samoa, — »If I spend my future life reading Baudelaire in a café I shall be leading a more natural life than if I take to hedger's work or plant cacao in mud-swamps.» Wilde's vocabulary, too, would seem to have retained something of the spirit of this influence.

Other names to be mentioned are Balzac, Huysmans (in *A Rebours*), Barbey d'Auréville, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, Maeterlinck, and Flaubert. These writers may be traced in *Dorian Gray*, in *A House of Pomegranates*, in *Salomé*, and in *The Poems in Prose*. The motif of *La Sainte Courtisane* (the tiny fragment of which was probably written in 1894, and at any rate after 1890) will be found identical with that of M. Anatole France's *Thaïs* (1890), and was very likely suggested by it. For *The Happy Prince* there seems to have been one model only, — Hans Andersen.

Many other names might be added. In fact, the list of those to whom in one way or another Wilde was indebted,

is practically inexhaustible, and must remain so. Now, what makes it a matter of real interest to search into these things more narrowly, and even proceed, while so doing, with some degree of scientific method, is the indisputable fact that, for all his eclecticism of style and of attitude, Wilde was no mere clever pupil or paltry paraphraser of the text of others, but a writer of boldly individual character, and altogether a man to be identified, in all essentials, with no one but himself. In the whole history of literature, probably very few authors of equal rank did to the same extent conjoin a quite feminine instinct of adaptability and imitation with an original and virile mould of mind. While imitating others, he remained true to himself. The countless things he borrowed from everywhere, what would they have helped him, had he not known how to fuse and transform them, by some subtle magic of his own, into elements of spiritual growth and artistic perfection, combining into a wonderful and unique entity of soul all that was his by nature, and all that came to him from outside? »He mixed pure wines, as it were, and created a new complex beverage, not perhaps for quaffing, but rather a liqueur, with a piquant and quite original flavour which still acknowledged the flavours of its constituents.» (Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties*, Lo. 1913, p. 104). No study of Wilde's intellectual or literary relationship with other writers that forgets this for an instant, can have any permanent value. As for the following two essays, to take them as starting from, or representing, any other point of view than the one indicated, would be to misapprehend their aim, and to ignore their endeavour.

I.¹⁾

Afew years ago, I had occasion, in a little memorial pamphlet, »Some Stray Notes on the Personality and Writings of Oscar Wilde,»²⁾ briefly to touch upon »the close intellectual relationship» between Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. I said something to the effect that any estimate passed on the latter that should leave out of account that relationship, would necessarily lead to some misapprehension as to his originality, and the comparative value and importance to be assigned to his works. And this is obviously the case. Mr. Th. Wright, in his *Life of Walter Pater* (1907), calls Wilde »the most enthusiastic» of Pater's disciples, and declares him to be »supersaturated with Pater.» Mr. Arthur Symons (to cite a more subtle critic), in a passage exaggerated in phrase but not wholly untrue in substance, writes: — » . . Toutes les fois qu'il essaye d'écrire d'une façon vraiment belle, son style, même en prose, cesse d'être sincère, écho confus de Pater ou de quelque écrivain français.» (*Op. cit.* p. 162). Wilde himself frequently, and in the most express terms, testifies to the profound influence that Pater exercised on him, and refers to him always in a deferential admiring way, which is in itself enough to draw out attention to the fact.³⁾ Pater's *Renaissance*, as he says,

¹⁾ First published in 1912.

²⁾ Printed in *Göteborgs Högre Samskola 1901-1911* (Gothenburg, 1911).

³⁾ Thus, in the Queensberry trial he incidentally referred to him as »the only critic of the century whose opinion he [had] high» and in *Intentions*

marks a turning-point in his life, a decisive experience, and certainly no other book has left so many or so various traces in his prose-works. Indeed, to no man does Wilde owe more as a writer of prose and as an aesthetic critic than to Pater. Try, if you can, for a moment to disregard what in his writings may be justly ascribed to the influence of the latter; and how vastly different would be the result from what it actually is! On what wholly different lines would his intellectual development have proceeded, what unknown fruits would it have borne, had there been in English letters no such name as Walter Pater? What kind of book would *Intentions* have been, had he not, prior to writing it, »saturated» his mind with that substantial nourishment, — Pater's *Renaissance*?

This influence of Pater comes in almost everywhere in Wilde's prose-works, chiefly in those of autobiography and criticism, in the general attitude towards life there taken, in the treatment of problems of art criticism, in style and phraseology, — now as an element of tone or colour, now in an almost literal incorporation of whole passages, or again as anything lying between these two extremes. In his first essays and lectures, published by Mr. Robert Ross in a posthumous volume, it asserts itself with an irritating persistency, and for all the author's cleverness of adaptation, usually in a manner we are unable to designate by any more courteous term than plagiarism, — though, curious to remark, Pater's name is not once mentioned in these pages. In *Intentions* (1st ed. 1891), it does so far less glaringly, though quite as extensively, but we no longer realize it as an extraneous and independent element. In *The Soul of Man* (appeared as a magazine article in 1891; first published in book-characterizes him as »on the whole, the most perfect master of English prose now existing amongst us.» — The earliest reference to Pater in Wilde's works occurs in a magazine article (»The Grosvenor Gallery») of 1877.

form 1904), whose »modernity of subject-matter» and rather vellement denunciations have already carried us a good way off from Pater, we find considerably less of it. In *De Profundis* (1st ed. 1905), there is hardly any at all; though, at certain points, this work may offer some vague resemblance to Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* and in a measure may indeed have been conditioned by it.

It will appear from what has just been said that, if we want to form an opinion of the literary relations between Pater and Wilde, we can do this no better than by a comparative study of the *Essays and Lectures* published by Mr. Ross, and *Intentions*,¹⁾ on the one hand, and on the other, Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1st ed. 1873),²⁾ and *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas* (1st ed. 1885). Such a comparative study is what I propose to present, within restricted limits, in the following pages. I shall abstain altogether from attempting to set forth, however briefly, the various doctrines, aesthetic or other, held by the two writers, and shall even leave out of consideration the cases where these doctrines coincide in such a way as to suggest that one has influenced the other, unless such influence has led to actual correspondence of expression. On the other hand, the reader's attention will be drawn to not a few cases where there is a coincidence of expression, but not one of subject-matter. My chief aim, in other words, will be to give an outline of the development of Wilde's prose-style in so far as it was determined by Pater's influence, and to supply some of the material necessary for filling out the frame thus indicated.

¹⁾ Besides those of Wilde's works already mentioned, these two have also been quoted from in the following: — *A House of Pomegranates* (ed. 1891) and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (ed. 1891).

²⁾ In later editions the title was altered to: *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*.

About half the volume of the *Essays* is made up of the lectures delivered by Wilde during his American tour in 1882—3. These lectures, in their published form, certainly betray a talent beyond the ordinary, as far as style is concerned,—yet more by reason of what promise they hold forth than by actual achievement,—no less than a remarkable gift of assimilation. One may even go the length of admiring, for the sake of its undeniable picturesqueness, the attitude of this young man who, at the age of 28, undertook to revolutionize the crude artistic taste of commercial America. As for the many inspiring things he had to say, — let us hope they greatly profited their hearers. It is to be feared, however, that Wilde somewhat underestimated the aesthetic culture of the more refined portion, at any rate, of his transatlantic audiences. He seems at least to have thought that their aesthetic culture was not quite up-to-date, and that their means of obtaining information about the English literary world were somewhat imperfect. Or else how should he have dared to lay under such heavy contribution certain authors of whom he might have naturally supposed that, as they were by no means obscure in England, they would be well known to any cultivated American? I do not know whether the charge of plagiarism was ever brought by American newspapers against Wilde's lectures. Small wonder if it was. I am not alluding to the fact that, as the subject-matter of these lectures, — involving the discussion not only of various points of mere technicality, but also of some general aesthetic principles,—went altogether beyond both his maturity of intellect and his practical experience, he was mainly reduced to saying over again, or referring to, the previous utterances upon those subjects of Ruskin and Pater, his then chief inspirers. That is to say, he might have done this in a manner more his own, and less suggestive of his complete intellectual dependency on these

writers. Such an essay as »The English Renaissance of Art» is delightfully written, but it is written in a style coloured throughout by the influence of Pater and Ruskin, and teems with reminiscences of both. There are things in it that seem already to exhibit the touch of a master-hand; on other points it is simply a literal transcription or hash of passages from Pater's *Renaissance*, etc., as will appear from the extracts I am about to give.

The first paragraph in the Preface to Pater's *Renaissance* ends in this way: — »To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics.«¹⁾ Something of this, in a shortened and mutilated shape, reappears in Wilde's »The English Renaissance of Art« (*Essays and Lectures*, Lo.1911,²⁾ p. 111), which begins thus: — »Among the many debts which we owe to the supreme aesthetic faculty of Goethe is that he was the first to teach us to define beauty in terms the most concrete possible, to realise it, I mean, always in its special manifestations.« And again, more faintly echoed, in the very first words of his »Lecture to Art Students«: — »In the lecture which it is my privilege to deliver before you to-night I do not desire to give you any abstract definition of beauty at all.« (*Essays*, p. 199.) As will be seen, the idea which Pater meant to convey in the passage just quoted, has also been perceptibly tampered with. To find »the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation« of beauty is surely quite a different thing

¹⁾ The quotations, with one exception, are from Methuen's Library edition (1910).

²⁾ This is Methuen's F'cap. 8vo ed. published at 5/-. The quotations from *Intentions*, *A House of Pomegranates* and *De Profundis* are from the same edition.

from realizing it »always in its special manifestations,»—a phrase that, as it stands here, is void of meaning. Nor does Pater ever, as far as I remember, connect the idea with Goethe's name.¹⁾— In his lecture on »The English Renaissance,» after making the remark about Goethe, Wilde goes on to say that he has no intention of trying to give his audience any such abstract definition of beauty, still less to communicate to them »that which in its essence is incommunicable, the virtue by which a particular picture or poem affects us with a unique and special joy,» etc. The last phrases, again, are a loan from Pater's Preface; for we have merely to look down page IX there, to find their counterpart:—»... the property each [picture, landscape, etc.] has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure.» Here, the words borrowed are made to express an idea that is even the very opposite of the one Pater associated with these words. For while »the virtue by which a particular picture or poem affects us with a unique and special joy,» is, according to Wilde, something »which in its essence is incommunicable,» the function of the aesthetic critic is precisely, Pater says, »to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts,» that virtue, and his »end is reached when he has disengaged» it, and »noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others,»— that is to say, as far as these latter are concerned, »communicated» it.

In the following instance, the perversion of the original

¹⁾ It is interesting to note that this passage has in all likelihood suggested also the following one in Arnold's *Essays in Criticism*, II, p. 20 (Lo. 1880):— »Critics give themselves great labour to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples; —to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest quality, and to say: The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*.»

meaning arises mainly from the insertion of a word,—*subject*,—that does but inadequately, or not at all, convey that meaning. »In sculpture,» Wilde declares (p. 113), a little further on in the lecture we are quoting from, »which is the type of one spirit [the classical], the subject predominates over the situation; in painting, which is the type of the other [the romantic], the situation predominates over the subject.» The corresponding passage in Pater runs thus:—»In it [sculpture] .. not the special situation, but the type, the general character of the subject to be delineated, is all-important. In poetry and painting, the situation predominates over the character; in sculpture, the character over the situation.» (*Ren.* p. 215).¹⁾ Everything is quite plain here. No ambiguity attaches to the word *character*; on the contrary it brings out with perfect clearness the essential qualities of sculpture, in contradistinction to those of poetry and painting. Wilde, failing to remember the passage exactly as it was, substituted a wrong word for the right one, his partiality for alliterative effects, already so pronounced in these his earliest writings, playing him a trick,—*situation—subject*.

The parallelism, as shown by the examples just given, may be limited to single short passages, to a couple of phrases, or it may, with additions and alterations of Wilde's own, tending to impair more or less the original meaning, extend so as to embrace a whole page, or even more. Thus,

¹⁾ In a review of 1885, Wilde again reproduced something of this: — »... comedy, where the situations predominate over the characters.»— Let it be added that in thus trying to establish by a striking antithesis the intrinsic difference between sculpture and those other arts, Pater himself, in his choice of terms, was no more original than Wilde was. Twenty years earlier, Matthew Arnold, in the Preface to the first series of his collected poems, speaking of the poetical theory of the Greeks, had written, in very nearly the same words: — »With them, the action predominated over the expression of it; with us, the expression predominates over the action.» (p. XIII, ed. 1853).

in the *Essays* a passage covering half of page 134 and nearly half the next, reproduces, though not in the same order, and with some freedom of detail, a number of passages on pp. 131—133 in *The Renaissance*.

Pater.

One of the functions of aesthetic criticism is . . . to note in a picture that true pictorial charm, which is neither a mere poetical thought or sentiment, on the one hand, nor a mere result of communicable technical skill in colour or design, on the other; to define in a poem that true poetical quality, which is neither descriptive nor meditative merely, but comes of an inventive handling of rhythmical language, the element of song in the singing . . . To suppose that [in a picture] all is mere technical acquirement in delineation or touch, working through and addressing itself to the intelligence, on the one side, or a merely poetical, or what may be called literary interest, addressed also to the pure intelligence, on the other:—this is the way of most spectators, and of

Wilde.

In its primary aspect a painting has no more spiritual message or meaning than an exquisite fragment of Venetian glass or a blue tile from the wall of Damascus: it is a beautifully coloured surface, nothing more. The channels by which all noble imaginative work in painting should touch, and do (*sic*) touch the soul, are not those of the truths of life, nor metaphysical truths. But that pictorial charm which does not depend on any literary reminiscence for its effect on the one hand, nor is yet a mere result of communicable technical skill on the other, comes of a certain inventive and creative handling of colour. . Nearly always in Dutch painting and often in the works of Giorgione or Titian, it is entirely independent of anything definitely poetical in

many critics, who have never caught sight all the time of that true pictorial quality which lies between, unique pledge, as it is, of the possession of the pictorial gift, that inventive or creative handling of pure line and colour, which, as almost always in Dutch painting, as often also in the works of Titian or Veronese, is quite independent of anything definitely poetical in the subject it accompanies... these essential pictorial qualities [colouring, drawing] must first of all delight the sense, delight it as directly and sensuously as a fragment of Venetian glass... In its primary aspect, a great picture has no more definite message for us than an accidental play of sunlight and shadow for a few moments on the wall or floor...

A good half of what is printed in the right-hand column, it will be seen, is a mere transcription from Pater.¹⁾

¹⁾ Most of it, together with yet a good many other reminiscences, has been further reproduced in Wilde's Introduction,—*L'Envoy*, —to Rennell Rodd's *Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf* (Phil. 1882), reprinted in the Library edition of Wilde's works in the vol. entitled *Miscellanies*, and the first para-

the subject... And so in poetry too, the real poetical quality, the joy of poetry, comes never from the subject but from an inventive handling of rhythmical language, from what Keats called the 'sensuous life of verse.' The element of song in the singing .. is so sweet that .. the thorn-crown of the poet will blossom into roses for our pleasure...

Nor is the way in which Wilde asserts his own individuality very remarkable. The coupling together of *message* and *meaning* is one of his usual tricks of alliteration, instances of which are rare in Pater. The reference to Keats is, on the other hand, a fine trait; for this, the »sensuous life of verse,» is exactly, it seems, what Pater understood by its »true poetical quality.» In all this, up to the words last quoted, there is, then, very little of Wilde, and very much of Pater. But it is curious to note how, from that point onward, the rest of the paragraph is conceived in an altogether different strain,—lyrical, and slightly sentimental, with much display of gorgeous imagery, such as we know well from his later writings.

The extracts next to be given, — from *The Renaissance*, pp. 210—213, ¹⁾ passim, and the *Essays*, pp. 151—152,—are, I think, of yet greater interest than the preceding ones, inasmuch as Wilde here follows Pater less slavishly, and consequently is able to bring in a little more of his own self. There is some degree of piquancy in thus finding welded together, within the space of a line or two, so as to form a kind of artificial and superficial unity, things deriving from two different sources, and in reality incongruous.

Pater.

Wilde.

Not the fruit of experience, There are two kinds of men but experience itself is the in the world, two great end... To burn always with creeds, two different forms

graphs of which may be fairly defined as an epitome of plagiarisms from Pater's essay on Giorgione, etc.—Cf. also »Lecture to Art Students» (*Essays*, pp. 210—211):—»Primarily, a picture is a beautifully coloured surface, merely, with no more spiritual message or meaning for you than an exquisite fragment of Venetian glass or a blue tile from the wall of Damascus. It is, primarily, a purely decorative thing, a delight to look at.»

¹⁾ The quotation is from the 1st ed., some of the phrases on which our comparison hinges having been altered in subsequent editions.

this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life . . . our one chance is in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. High passions give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, political or religious enthusiasm, or the 'enthusiasm of humanity.' Only, be sure it is passion, that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

of natures: men to whom the end of life is action, and men to whom the end of life is thought. As regards the latter, who seek for experience itself and not for the fruits of experience, who must burn always with one of the passions of this fiery-coloured world, who find life interesting not for its secret but for its situations, for its pulsations and not for its purpose; the passion for beauty engendered by the decorative arts will be to them more satisfying than any political or religious enthusiasm, any enthusiasm for humanity, any ecstasy or sorrow for love. For art comes to one professing primarily to give nothing but the highest quality to one's moments, and for those moments' sake.

It should be observed that Wilde associates, with rather unhappy effect, the expressions and suggestions he derives from Pater, with subjects that Pater does not even mention in this connection. Pater says nothing of a difference between men of action and men of thought, nor yet of the decorative arts as being distinguished from other arts as instruments of aesthetic stimulus. And, of course, he would never

have written that nonsense about »the passion for beauty engendered by the decorative arts» being »more satisfying,» to men »to whom the end of life is thought,» than, say, »any ecstasy or sorrow for love.» It is equally absurd to say of men »to whom the end of life is thought,» that they »find life interesting not for its secret but for its situations,» etc. It would have been more true the other way about. — There are some points of diction that may deserve a few words of comment. *Fiery-coloured* is a phrase much affected by Wilde; it occurs at least half a dozen times in his other writings, in *Intentions*, in *The Soul of Man*, and elsewhere. *Secret*,—another favourite word of his, as readers of him will be aware, — also belongs to that considerable group of words and idioms which, having degenerated into mere mannerisms with him, he uses in a quite stereotyped fashion, for their own sake, as it were, without realizing, each time anew, their true value and subtler shades of meaning. It is, by the way, a word frequently used by Pater, both as a noun and as an adjective. *Secret*—*situations*—*pulsations*—*purpose*,—a cheap contrivance that merely sacrifices sense to sound. As for the rest of the passage, there is nothing noteworthy about it. The effect of the last sentence is a trifle lessened by the substitution of *primarily* for *frankly*, as Pater has it.

The following parallel, too, no doubt offers some points of interest. On page 2 in his work on the Renaissance, Pater gives this general definition of his subject:—

For us the Renaissance is the name of a many-sided but yet united movement, in which the love of the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, the desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life, make themselves felt, urging those who experience this desire to

search out first one and then another means of intellectual and imaginative enjoyment, and directing them not only to the discovery of old and forgotten sources of this enjoyment, but to the divination of fresh sources thereof—new experiences, new subjects of poetry, new forms of art.

Now, if we were to believe Wilde, the »English Renaissance of Art« had not a few features in common with the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth century, for, with a reference to that movement, and very much in Pater's own words, he speaks of »its desire for a more gracious and comely way of life, its passion for physical beauty, its exclusive attention to form, its seeking for new subjects of poetry, new forms of art, new intellectual and imaginative enjoyments.« (*Essays*, p. 112). The slight changes of phraseology introduced by Wilde, were no doubt necessitated by his having to make the expressions used applicable to the one »Renaissance« as well as to the other. That it was exclusively attentive to form, may, or may not, be true of the pre-Raphaelite movement. Of the Italian Renaissance, as Pater conceived of it, it was certainly not true. Pater, I think, nowhere says that its attention was directed exclusively to form. Another addition of Wilde's is not really an addition,—that about the passion for physical beauty; the same phrase, or very nearly, is used on pages, XII, 5, and 24 in *The Renaissance*.

Wilde's attitude to Music is curious. Scattered in some of his books, there are not a few utterances on that subject, from which it would appear that, even though he did not practise the art himself, he was very fond of it, and had thought a great deal about it. Now, the fact seems to be that he knew next to nothing about music, and that, so far from taking pleasure in hearing it, it was rather a great bore

to him. Mr. Sherard, who should know something about the matter, states this in his biography of Wilde in explicit enough terms:— »It is a fact that music bored him; it is a fact that he had no knowledge of any instrument; it is probable that he could with difficulty distinguish one tune from another. Yet he was forced to posture as a *connoisseur*, and to speak and write about musicians and music with the air of one who was profoundly versed in all the technique of the art.«¹⁾ As there are no reasons for questioning the truth or accuracy of this statement from one who knew Wilde intimately for years, what is more natural than to ask ourselves whether, in thus pronouncing himself with some show of authority upon matters that were evidently beyond his grasp, he was not clothing himself with borrowed plumes? And so he was, in fact. His criticisms concerning the philosophy of music are, after all, not very numerous, nor of a very elaborate character; but such as they are, they merely re-echo certain dicta of Pater's on that subject in his essay on Giorgione, partly repeated, later on, in that on »Style,« in *Appreciations* (1 ed. 1889). Thus, when, Wilde says:—

.. music is the art in which form and matter are always one, the art whose subject cannot be separated from the method of its expression, the art which most completely realises the artistic ideal, and is the condition to which all the other arts are constantly aspiring. (*Essays*, p. 136),

this is after all nothing but the following two passages in Pater thrown into one:—

All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. For while in all other kinds of art it is possible

¹⁾ R. H. Sherard, *The Life of Oscar Wilde* (Lo. 1906, p. 134).

to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. (*Ren.* p. 135).

It is the art of music which most completely realises this artistic ideal, this perfect identification of matter and form. In its consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression . . and to it, therefore, to the condition of its perfect moments, all the arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire. (*Ren.* pp. 138—139).

And we are again reminded of Pater in these words in *De Profundis* (Lo. 1912, pp. 53—54): — »Music, in which all subject is absorbed in expression and cannot be separated from it, is a complex example . . of what I mean . . .» In »The Decay of Lying» and »The Critic as Artist,» Wilde maintains with Pater that in music is indeed to be found »the true type or measure of perfected art,» though he assigns for its preeminence some reasons of his own. In the dialogue first-mentioned, Vivian, with a direct reference to Pater, declares: — »Art never expresses anything but itself. This is the principle of my new aesthetics; and it is this, more than that vital connection between form and substance, on which Mr. Pater dwells, that makes music the type of all the arts.» (*Int.* p. 42). Gilbert, in »The Critic as Artist,» arrives at the identical conclusion by yet another route: — » . . when the ideal is realised, it is robbed of its wonder and its mystery, and becomes simply a new starting-point for an ideal that is other than itself. This is the reason why music is the perfect type of art. Music can never reveal its

ultimate secret.» (*Ini.* p. 148).¹⁾ Cf. also *The Soul of Man*:— «Of course, form and substance cannot be separated in a work of art; they are always one. But for purposes of analysis, and setting the wholeness of æsthetic impression aside for a moment, we can intellectually so separate them.» (I.O. 1912, p. 54).

Quite a number of other, longer or shorter, passages in the *Essays* have, each of them, its analogue in Pater. Here is a parallelism of much the same pattern as those previously given: —

Pater.

Goethe illustrates a union of the Romantic spirit, in its adventure, its variety, its profound subjectivity of soul, with Hellenism, in its transparency, its rationality, its desire of beauty — that marriage of Faust and Helena, of which the art of the nineteenth century is the child, the beautiful lad Eu-

Wilde.

It is really from the union of Hellenism, in its breadth, its sanity of purpose, its calm possession of beauty, with the adventive [sic. of course a misreading for *adventure*, the corresponding word in Pater], the intensified individualism, the passionate colour of the romantic spirit, that springs the art of the

¹⁾ This truth, we may note in passing, had been already more than hinted at by Poe, — to go no further back. Poe, too, was aware that Music might, in a sense, lay claim to a sort of supremacy or ideal place among the arts. In his lecture on »The Poetic Principle» he says:— »It is in music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which .. it struggles,—the creation of supernal beauty.» For him, too, music was »the perfect type of art,»—»the most entrancing of the poetic moods,» he calls it,—because in it, more intensely than in any other art, we are made to realize our inability to grasp »those divine and rapturous joys, of which *through* the poem or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.»

phorion . . . (*Ren.* pp. 226—227).

nineteenth century in England, as from the marriage of Faust and Helen of Troy sprang the beautiful boy Euphorion. (*Essays*, p. 112).

The »monstrous, many-breasted idol of Ephesus» (p. 117) recalls »the orientalised, many-breasted Diana of Ephesus.» (*Ren.* p. 205). This aphorism, »the demand of the intellect is merely to feel itself alive» (p. 141), —repeated in *Intentions* (p. 203) with the addition, »as has been well said,»—is taken, almost without change, from the essay on Winckelmann (*Ren.* p. 229); while the remark made immediately afterwards,—that »nothing which has ever interested men or women can cease to be a fit subject for culture,»—will be recognized as a mere paraphrase of Pater's ».. the essence of humanism is that belief . . that nothing which has ever interested living men and women can wholly lose its vitality . . . (*Ren.* p. 49). And that other saying about a picture being primarily »a purely decorative thing» (pp. 211, 212), was clearly suggested by, »painting must be before all things decorative» (*Ren.* p. 140). The reference implied in this utterance, »while art has been defined as an escape from the tyranny of the senses, it is an escape rather from the tyranny of the soul.» (p. 148), may be to these words in *The Renaissance*: — »It has been sometimes said that art is a means of escape from 'the tyranny of the senses'.» (p. 221), rather than to the original source quoted by Pater. Something of the latter, too, there must be in the following passage: — »The artist who goes to the children's playground, watches them at their sport and sees the boy stoop to tie his shoe, will find the same themes that engaged the attention of the ancient Greeks...» (p. 168), where there is, at least, some faint suggestion of these lines in *The Renaissance*:

— »The actions selected [by Greek sculpture] are those which would be without significance, except in a divine person—binding on a sandal or preparing for the bath.» (p. 217). — For further examples cf. *Ren.* 130—*Essays* 142; *Ren.* 199—*Ess.* 128; *Ren.* 18—*Ess.* 142, *Misc.* 39; *Ren.* 132, 133—*Ess.* 134, 151, 186.

It is noteworthy that, with a few exceptions, the quotations made hitherto from Pater's work, are all from its Preface or its »Conclusion,» from the latter half of the essay on Winckelmann, and the introductory pages of that on Giorgione. It was especially from these last, with their subtle remarks on that curious *Anders-streben*, or struggling of each art towards the condition or law of some other art, and in which the supreme importance, in all aesthetic enjoyment, of »the sensuous element in art» is eloquently dwelt upon, that he derived not a little of what, in his disquisitions on the decorative arts and kindred subjects, is not mere verbiage or rhetoric. —

Between the American lectures and the essays published under the collective title of *Intentions*,¹⁾ as well as some other work of his from that period which also comes into consideration here, there is an interval of several years. A slender volume of fairy tales in H. C. Andersen's manner, another, not much bigger, of short stories with modern subjects, written in a playful easy vein, a brilliant and »documented» essay on a theatrical subject, some poetry, and miscellaneous contributions to magazines and daily papers,—these were the output of those years, and they may not have been of a nature to attract very wide attention. In 1889—1891, however, he wrote, in addition to other things, those essays in aesthetic criticism which, in a sense, may be said to mark

¹⁾ The last of these, »The Truth of Masks,» or, as it was originally called, »Shakespeare and Stage Costume,» appeared as early as 1885; the others were first published as magazine articles in 1889 and 1890.

the apogee of his life-work, and certainly constitute the most interesting and the most complete record of one phase of his genius. In *Intentions*, in *The Soul of Man*, too,—if we look upon that essay, not so much as a work of art, but as a faithful and vigorous expression of the author's views on social life, as a »breviary« of aesthetic individualism,—we come face to face with a personality in the ripeness and plenitude of experienced manhood, in full possession of its rich intellectual gifts, and enjoying a perfect mastery of the technical elements of the literary art.

It will be readily understood that in work resulting from conditions such as these, it is a matter of some niceness to disengage from the even and solid fabric of its style whatever elements there may be in it of alien influence. It is clear, too, that where such an influence is at all present, it is much less likely to betray itself by direct and conscious borrowings, by an actual resemblance of a number of passages, than by a fondness for certain modes of sentence-construction and word-order, certain rhythmical effects and cadences, certain words and tricks of phrase recurring frequently and used sometimes, one would say, to the exclusion of more appropriate ones; finally, more vaguely, by something operating through all these various elements of style, and which is, in fact, a synthesis thereof,—the dominant »tone« or »colour« of a passage, of a page, of a whole chapter.

In the essay »Pen, Pencil, and Poison,« Wilde declares of Wainewright, the subject of that essay, that he »never lost sight of the great truth that Art's first appeal is neither to the intellect nor to the emotions, but purely to the artistic temperament...« (*Int.* p. 66) ¹⁾. I am not aware

¹⁾ Already in his lecture on »The English Renaissance of Art,« (*Essays and Lectures*, p. 127), he had spoken of »The entire subordination of all intellectual and emotional faculties to the vital and informing poetic principle« as »the surest sign of the strength« of that movement.

whether this »truth» was ever formulated by Wainewright himself, and, if so, in terms approaching to those used by Wilde. However that may be, these bear a marked, and hardly accidental, resemblance to the following utterance in Pater's study »The School of Giorgione»:—» . . . art addresses not pure sense, still less the pure intellect, but the »imaginative reason» through the senses . . . »(*Ren.* p. 130). In »The Critic as Artist,» the idea is still further expanded: —

It is through its very incompleteness that Art becomes complete in beauty, and so addresses itself, not to the faculty of recognition nor to the faculty of reason, but to the æsthetic sense alone, which, while accepting both reason and recognition as stages of apprehension, subordinates them both to a pure synthetic impression of the work of art as a whole, and, taking whatever alien emotional elements the work may possess, uses their very complexity as a means by which a richer unity may be added to the ultimate impression itself. (*Int.* pp 148—149).

The terminology adopted by Wilde seems to me to be less adequate than Pater's. For while »imaginative reason»¹⁾ and »æsthetic sense» may be fairly well used indiscriminately, the expression »artistic temperament,» in the first quotation, is too indefinite, and the antithesis of »pure sense» and »pure intellect,» in Pater, is certainly more to the point than the one of either »intellect» and »emotions,» or »the faculty of recognition» and »the faculty of reason,» as Wilde has it. For the phrase, »taking whatever alien emo-

¹⁾ A phrase borrowed, probably, from Arnold, who, in his *Essays in Criticism* (1865, p. 212), speaks of Poetry as »the priestess of the imaginative reason.»

tional elements the work may possess», compare *Ren.* pp. 140—141: — »..painting must be before all things decorative, a thing for the eye, a space of colour on the wall.. this, to begin and end with; whatever higher matter of thought, or poetry, or religious reverie might play its part therein, between.» — In the essay just cited, Wilde, speaking of Wainewright, has another remark that reproduces some words in Pater. »As an art-critic,» Wilde says, »he concerned himself primarily with the complex impressions produced by a work of art, and certainly the first step in æsthetic criticism is to realise one's own impressions.» (*Int.* p. 66). Cf. *Ren.* p. VIII: — ».. in æsthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly.»

The following passages also clearly belong together: —

He [the critic] will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal. (*Ren.* p. X).

What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte, or of Hegel, or of our own. (*Ren.* p. 237).

He [the artist] will not .. in intellectual matters acquiesce in that facile orthodoxy of our day which is so reasonable and so artistically uninteresting.. rather will he be always curiously testing new forms of belief .. searching for experience itself, and not for the fruits of experience; when he has got its secret, he will leave without regret much that was once

very precious to him. (»I, Envoy,» *Miscellanies*. p. 39).¹⁾

The æsthetic critic, constant only to the principle of beauty in all things, will ever be looking for fresh impressions, winning from the various schools the secret of their charm, bowing, it may be, before foreign altars, or smiling, if it be his fancy, at strange new gods. (*Int.* p. 185).

The true critic will . . . always be sincere in his devotion to the principle of beauty, but he will seek for beauty in every age and in each school, and will never suffer himself to be limited to any settled custom of thought, or stereotyped mode of looking at things. (*Int.* p. 191).

To say of anyone that he is »sincere in his devotion to the principle of beauty,»²⁾ or »constant to the principle of beauty in all things,» is surely a somewhat awkward pleonasm. (Cf. »music is the art whose subject cannot be separated from the method of its expression»). »Bowing . . . before foreign altars, or smiling . . . at strange new gods,» may be noted as a typical Wildeism.

By far the most striking and interesting example, however, of the kind of parallelism we are studying, will be afforded by a comparison between the famous and frequently quoted »La Gioconda» passage in *The Renaissance* (pp. 124—126) and a lengthy passage in *Intentions* (pp. 173

¹⁾ Cf. »... what is meant by life in the whole—*im Ganzen*? It means the life of one for whom . . . what was once precious has become indifferent.» (*Ren.* p. 228).

²⁾ Obviously suggested by Keats's — »I have loved the principle of beauty in all things.»

—175). Here, there is no actual correspondence as far as mere words go; such phrases on which a comparison might be based more particularly, recall each other but vaguely, and do not occur in the same order. Yet, in this passage in *Intentions*, everything, not a few suggestive expressions only, but the peculiar strain of feeling with which it is all imbued, its general imaginative colouring, points to the same source of inspiration. That wonderful page of reverie, we may be certain, has haunted Wilde's mind as it has haunted the minds of other men. Like others, he will have kept musing over it and repeating its words to himself, left it and come back to it anew, as if unable to shake off its strange fascination, until at last he may have known it all by heart. When reading such books as *Intentions* and *Dorian Gray*, we have a definite impression that this must indeed be so; and in many of his other writings we hear the same accent again. (Thus, e. g. in *De Profundis*, p. 65). But how deeply impressed with it he once was; how far, when in certain moods, he was apt to be affected, in this treatment of language, by its weird and subtle music; this will be best gathered from the passage referred to above. The texts placed in juxtaposition below, are printed for economy of space in a somewhat abbreviated form: —

Pater.

The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all “the ends of the world are come,” and the eyelids are a little weary.

Wilde.

.. while in the sphere of practical and external life it [the principle of Heredity] has robbed energy of its freedom and activity of its choice, in the subjective sphere, where the soul is at work, it comes to us, this terrible shadow, with many

It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! .. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants¹⁾ .. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life.

gifts in its hands, gifts of strange temperaments and subtle susceptibilities, gifts of wild ardours and chill moods of indifference, complex multiform gifts of thoughts that are at variance with each other, and passions that war against themselves. And so, it is not our own life that we live, but the lives of the dead, and the soul that dwells within us is no single spiritual entity, making us personal and individual, created for our service, and entering into us for our joy. It is something that has dwelt in fearful places, and in ancient sepulchres has made its abode. It is sick with many maladies, and has memories of curious sins. It is wiser than we are, and its wisdom is bitter. It fills us with impossible desires, and makes us follow what we know we cannot gain. etc.

¹⁾ Cf. »He never trafficked with the merchants for his soul ... » *Wilde, Reviews* (Library edition, 1908, p. 151).

The passage in *Intentions*, although without the attractiveness of an original invention, has still, it will be felt, some magnetic flavour about it, some strange hybrid beauty even, arising from a blending in it of two temperaments so widely different. The *motif*, — the emotional key-note,— does not belong, by right of origination, to Wilde; but he makes variations upon it and works it out in a strain unmistakeably his, intertwining with characteristic additions of his own the quaint conceits of Pater. The following few points of phraseology might be noted as in their way conducive to this impression. In the first instance, »gifts of wild ardours and chill moods of indifference,» — an antithesis of a kind entirely foreign to Pater's habits of style. Further, parallelisms such as, »robbed energy of its freedom and activity of its choice,» »thoughts that are at variance with each other, and passions that war against themselves,» »created for our service, and entering into us for our joy.» The chiasmus, »Something that has dwelt in fearful places,» etc. Alliterative devices as, »It is sick with *many maladies*, and has *memories of curious sins*.» Reminiscences of scriptural dictation such as, »It is wiser than we are, and its wisdom is bitter.»

Next, let us dwell for a moment on these lines in *Intentions* (pp. 175—176): — ».. the contemplative life, the life that has for its aim not *doing* but *being*, and not *being* merely, but *becoming*—that is what the critical spirit can give us.» The idea conveyed in these words is one to which he reverts not infrequently, and always with a kind of emphasis that makes it expressive of some serious conviction and feeling on his part about the matter. For though Wilde's temperament was certainly not of the contemplative genus, and had, indeed, some of the positive constituents in it of the man of the world and the man of action, there can be little doubt as to where his sympathies really inclined, and that, notwithstanding

standing such impure and coarser elements of his nature as always tended to drag him downwards and impede the free and noble growth of his genius, the spirit of contemplation, a spectatorial and detached attitude, the merely passive enjoyment of life through the senses and the mind, were to him the highest standard of perfection, the ultimate issue of man's spiritual development. It will not surprise us, then, to hear him say approvingly of Wainewright that this young dandy »sought to be somebody, rather than to do something.» (*Int.* p. 63); or affirm elsewhere that »The true perfection of man lies, not in what man has, but in what man is,» and again, that »What Jesus does say is that man reaches his perfection, not through what he has, not even through what he does, but entirely through what he is.» (*The Soul of Man*, pp. 16, 25; cf. also *De Profundis*, p. 39). All these, it will be seen, are mere variations upon the same thought, which, as Wilde himself takes care to point out, is in true accordance with the teaching of the Gospels. Now Pater, who surely went further in realizing this ideal of a spiritual detachment, of the contemplative life, than Wilde ever did, and whose work may well, in the eyes of the latter, have stood as an exponent of that ideal, has formulated the very same principle,¹⁾—as brought to bear upon the individual development of a fictitious personage,—in two passages in *Marius the Epicurean*, running thus:

“Not what I do, but what I am, under the power of this vision”—he would say to himself—“is what were indeed pleasing to the gods!” (I, p. 167).

¹⁾ Not, perhaps, without vaguely remembering that Arnold had once defined the perfection of social and cultivated man as »an inward condition of the mind and spirit,» as »not a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming.» (In *Culture and Anarchy*, which strikes a curiously similar note, on many points, to the above-quoted passages).

Revelation, vision, the discovery of a vision, the *seeing* of a perfect humanity in a perfect world:—through all his alternations of mind, by some dominant instinct, determined by the original necessities of his own nature and character, he had always set that above the *having*, or even the *doing*, of anything. For, such vision, if received with due attitude on his part, was, in reality, the *being* something, and as such was surely a pleasant offering or sacrifice to whatever gods there might be, observant of him. (II, p. 239).

True, there are dissimilarities of phrasing, but hardly other than such as are due either to temperamental or similar causes in the writers concerned, or else to the difference in applying the same idea. So there seems to be little exaggeration in saying that, as regards the expressions used to convey that idea, Wilde's indebtedness to Pater may be considered a fact. How strongly this idea appealed to him, may be gathered also from a review of his of Pater's *Appreciations* (March 22, 1890), where he quotes, with the remark that it »contains a truth eminently suitable for our age,» a passage from that work beginning:— »That the end of life is not action but contemplation—*being* as distinct from *doing*—a certain disposition of the mind: is, in some shape or other, the principle of all the higher morality.»

Passing on to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, we may find the following few points worthy of attention. Lord Henry's words to Dorian on their last night together:—

»..Ah, Dorian, how happy you are! What an exquisite life you have had! You have drunk deeply of everything. You have crushed the grapes against

your paiate. Nothing has been hidden from you. And it has all been to you no more than the sound of music. . . » (Lo. Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co. N. D. pp. 239—240),

show us that, like his creator, the versatile lord was endowed with an excellent memory and was fond of quoting Pater, for in listening to that speech, are we not reminded that Pater wrote once of »*La Gioconda*»:— »..and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes . . . » (*Ren.* p. 125)? »Fashion, by which what is really fantastic becomes for a moment universal, and Dandyism, which, in its own way, is an attempt to assert the absolute modernity of beauty, had, of course, their fascination for him.» (pp. 145—146), seems coloured with a faint reminiscence of Pater's — »Herein, again, lies what is valuable and justly attractive, in what is called the fashion of a time, which elevates the trivialities of speech, and manner, and dress, into "ends in themselves," . . . » (*Ren.* p. 138). Just as in the following lines: — » .. the sorrow and despair of one who had himself lost what in others, and in the world, he had most dearly valued [*viz.* youth and beauty] (p. 143), some touches would seem to be foreshadowed by these words in *Marius* (I, p. 243): — » .. an old age in which there seemed, to one who perhaps habitually overvalued the expression of youth, nothing to be regretted, nothing really lost, in what years had taken away.» In the same chapter (XI) there is a paragraph running thus: —

Yes: there was to be . . . a new Hedonism that was to recreate life, and to save it from that harsh, uncomely puritanism that is having, in our own day, its curious revival. It was to have its service of the

intellect, certainly; yet, *it was never to accept any theory or system that would involve the sacrifice of any mode of passionate experience. Its aim, indeed, was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience*, sweet or bitter as they might be. Of the asceticism that deadens the senses, as of the vulgar profligacy that dulls them, it was to know nothing. But it was to teach man to concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is itself but a moment. (p. 147).

The words printed in italics (which are mine) will be found to be merely a paraphrase of the following two passages in *The Renaissance*: —

The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience.. has no real claim upon us. (pp. 237—238).

Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. (p. 236).

The »sweet or bitter as they might be,» as well as the sentence that comes immediately after, is a characteristic addition in Wilde's own manner; whereas the expression, »It was to have its service of the intellect,» suggests,—if it is, indeed, worth while to insist upon such a trifle,—»The service of philosophy,» etc. (*Ren.* p. 236). The concluding sentence, »But it was to teach man,» etc. — just as the thought it embodies does but vary a little and gather, as in a formula, the main theme of Pater's »Conclusion,»—would seem to imply some reminiscence of things uttered there

as, for instance. —» .. all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is.» (p. 235).

And, finally, might we not say that in the following passage in Pater's *Imaginary Portraits* (Lo. 1887, 1st. ed., p. 103) there lies embodied, as it were, the theory expounded in »The Decay of Lying» (*Int.* pp. 38—41) about Nature being »an imitation of Art,» especially as applied to the art of landscape-painting: — »Albert Cuyp was there, who, developing the latent gold in Rembrandt, had brought into his native Dordrecht a heavy wealth of sunshine,» etc? Seeing the way Wilde was usually inspired to literary activity, there is nothing surprising in the fact that with this one line from Pater,—a mere pretty conceit,—for his starting-point, he should have worked out a whole theory, supporting it by a wealth of illustration from the history of Art (suggestive detail: among the landscape-painters whom he mentions, the one cited as representative of the old Dutch school is precisely Cuyp!), and setting it forth with the semblance of a daringly new departure. — Pater's *Imaginary Portraits*, by the way, have certainly left traces in yet another work of Wilde's. The opening paragraphs of »The Young King,» in *A House of Pomegranates*, were doubtless written under the sway of some lingering reminiscence of Pater's »Denys l'Auxerrois,» in *Imaginary Portraits*. Not only is there this likeness of narrative incident that the young king is supposed to be »the child of the old King's only daughter by a secret marriage with one much beneath her in station,» while, as for Denys, »there were some who connected his birth with the story of a beautiful country girl, who .. had been taken from her own people .. for the pleasure of the Count of Auxerre.» But the general *motif* of Pater's study, the reigning, for a brief season, at the little French medi-

several town, Auxerre, of a sort of golden age, a marvellous re-awakening into life (strangely associated with the personality of Denys) of the old pagan deities,—this conception might well have suggested to Wilde the idea of representing the young king as »kneeling in real adoration before a great picture that had just been brought from Venice, and that seemed to herald the worship of some new gods.» While just to give a hint of how intimately, in these first pages, the tale is reminiscent of Pater generally, in tone and phrasing, I will quote these few passages: — » .. lying there, wild-eyed and open-mouthed, like a brown woodland Faun, or some young animal of the forest newly snared by the hunters.» (Cf. Pater, »the beautiful hunted creature»). »And it seems that from the very first moment of his recognition he had shown signs of that strange passion for beauty that was destined to have so great an influence over his life.» » .. like one who was seeking to find in beauty an anodyne from pain, a sort of restoration from sickness.»

The preceding examination, though making no claims to exhaustiveness, will yet, I believe, be found to include enough quotations to show the indebtedness, in a general way, of Wilde to Pater. In the face of such evidence, it is impossible to disguise from oneself the fact that Pater's was a vital and powerful influence in the course of Wilde's intellectual development. Some fine, jewelled phrases, certain delicate touches that occur in this or that book of his are either, as we have shown, in all likelihood deliberate borrowings from Pater, or, by some process of unconscious reminiscence, they reproduce, exactly or not, passages in that writer.¹⁾ It would seem unwarrantable, however, to

¹⁾ There seems to be a good deal of truth in either of the following statements: — »He stole freely, but often mounted other men's jewels so well that they are better in his work than in their own.» (A. Ransome, *Oscar*

conclude from these facts alone that Pater had a real formative influence on the fashioning of Wilde's prose-style. A book may abound in allusions and reminiscences, and yet its style, as a faithful medium of the author's temperament and genius, may preserve an original, a unique character, recognizable at once and among a thousand others. It remains, then, to see whether, apart from being abundantly quoted from, plagiarized, or otherwise imitated by Wilde, Pater's writings were in any way connected with the formation and growth of the peculiar qualities of prose-style displayed in a work like *Intentions*, and elsewhere.

Now, no one will have any difficulty in realizing the fundamental dissimilarity that there is between Wilde's style and Pater's style,—a dissimilarity resulting from a difference of temperament and turn of mind in the writers themselves. Rhythm and sentence-structure,—they differ as much in the one as in the other; and cannot well but differ, these being the elements or aspects of style in which, more than in any others, an author's peculiar temperament is likely to betray itself, and where, accordingly, an extraneous influence seems least admissible. It will have struck any reader of Wilde how easily, when in a mood of passionate and fiery eloquence, he drops into a kind of rhythmic sonority, of cadenced movement of speech, suggestive, in its regular sequence of strong and weak syllables, of now this, now that one of the accepted metres; so that one may have an impression, not invariably a pleasant one, as if certain passages of his were actually made up, to some extent, of fragments of poetry. This, combined, as in most cases it is, with repetition and parallelism, with alliteration and assonance, is indeed one of the most striking features of his

Wilde: *A Critical Study*, Lo. 1912, p. 24). — »His memory was always extraordinary and perhaps too retentive. He often reproduced phrases of other writers *unconsciously*.« (Mr. Sherard, in a letter to myself).

style, and as such may serve aptly as a touchstone for a discrimination of what is truly characteristic of him. It is easy to give typical instances from any of his works. Thus, to take a few at mere random: — » . . . the remembrance even of joy having its bitterness, and the memories of pleasure their pain. » (*Dorian Gray*, p. 148). » . . . robed in the garments of the Passion of Christ, breaking the Host into the chalice, and smiting his breast for his sins. » (*Ibid.* p. 149). » . . . an entirely new race of beings . . . who had monstrous and marvellous sins, monstrous and marvellous virtues. » (*Int.* p. 20). » Out of the ceaseless winds that drive them, the carnal look at us, and we watch the heretic rending his flesh, and the glutton lashed by the rain. » (*Ibid.* p. 160). » When we have done penance, and are purified, and have drunk of the fountain of Lethe and bathed in the fountain of Eunoë . . . » (*Ibid.* p. 164). » He tells us . . . how steep are the stairs in the house of a stranger. » (*Ibid. ibid.*) » . . . chaunting in darkness the words that are winged with light. » (*Ibid.* p. 114). » But they saw that the sea was for the swimmer, and the sand for the feet of the runner. » (*De Prof.* p. 116). Cadences of this, or of a similar type, are extremely frequent in Wilde. But of these Pater has none, or very few. Those short crisp periods built up of two or three co-ordinate sentences, equivalent or opposite to each other in meaning, that lent themselves with such fitness to the brilliant sayings and clever paradoxes for which we admire Wilde,—these came much less naturally, as an appropriate mode of expression, to Pater, whose care was rather for a dainty and delicate presentment, with much byplay of suggestive or picturesque detail, of the more evanescent shades and curious aspects of things. Certain of Wilde's pages, one may think, are marred by an excess of alliteration, whereas Pater's work is exempt from blemishes of this kind.

»It seems to me that this sound and sensible maxim, which is extremely soothing...» »There are moments when he wounds us with monstrous music,» — Pater would hardly have written like that. And then he does not write sentences that scan like poetry. Or he does it so very rarely that our attention is immediately arrested by the few snatches of metrical prose that may occur in this or that of his writings. As, for instance, in *Marius* (I, p. 92): — »The dark stream which flows down thence waters the Stygian fields, and swells the flood of Cocytus.» Or in these two passages in *The Renaissance*: — »These friendships, bringing him into contact with the pride of human form, and staining the thoughts with its bloom...» (p. 191). »... our own conception of nature, with its unlimited space, its innumerable suns, and the earth but a mote in the beam...» (p. 41).

With regard to sentence-structure and word-order, save one or two exceptions, we shall be equally at a loss to detect any such similarity between the two writers as may plausibly be set down to an influence of one upon the other. No attempt will be made here at a characterization of Pater's methods of sentence-construction, with a view to comparing them with those of Wilde. But I shall quote a few brief passages by which his highly elaborate technique, with its curious love for involutions and parentheses, will receive some suitable illustration. In the Preface to *The Renaissance*, he says that that word was originally used to denote —

that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century which was only one of many results of a general excitement and enlightening of the human mind, but of which the great aim and achievements of what, as Christian art, is often falsely opposed to the Renaissance, were another result. (p. XII).

Nearly as intricate are the following two passages:—

So the old French *chanson*, which, like the old northern Gothic ornament, though it sometimes refined itself into a sort of weird elegance, was often, in its essence, something rude and formless, became in the hands of Ronsard a Pindaric ode. (p. 158).

And it is for his share in this work, and because his own story is a sort of analogue or visible equivalent to the expression of this purpose in his writings, that something of a general interest still belongs to the name of Pico della Mirandola...» (p. 35).

These are extreme specimens, but typical, and certainly have no equivalents in Wilde. Or take, on the other hand, a peculiar mode of sentence-structure very much favoured by the latter, the sort of inversion called *chiasmus*, or cross-order. To quote a few examples:—»..the thorn-crown of the poet will blossom into roses for our pleasure; for our delight his despair will gild its own thorns...» (*Essays*, p. 135). »Young men..have died by their own hand because by his own hand Werther died.» (*Int.* p. 38). »We have whispered the secret of our love beneath the cowl of Abelard, and in the stained raiment of Villon have put our shame into song.» (*Ibid.* p. 174). »Mysticism..and the subtle antinomianism that always seems to accompany it, moved him for a season; and for a season he inclined to the materialistic doctrines of the *Darwinismus* movement in Germany...» (*Dorian Gray*, p. 149). »..though I may fall many times in the mire and often in the mist go astray.» (*De Profundis*, p. 59). Instances of this order are rare in Pater. I have not noted a single one.

There are, however, as has been said, one or two points

as regards word-order where the practice usually or, at least, occasionally followed by Wilde, may have something to do with a similar tendency observable in Pater. The placing, I mean, of certain adverbs, *also*, *always*, etc., and, perhaps, though less probably, the use of the »split-infinitive.» As to the latter, I shall only say that, according to Mr. Wright, Pater »often splits his infinitives,» and that this may very well be so, though I confess not to have been particularly struck by the fact. The construction does not seem to be used very often by Wilde, however. The more striking is his habit of putting emphasis on the adverbs *also* and *always*, by placing them, the former almost invariably at the end of the sentence, the latter very often so, and, in compound forms, not between the auxiliary and the principal verb, but, contrary to common usage, after the latter. These things may not be very suggestive in themselves, but by reason of their frequent occurrence become invested, as it were, with a kind of significance or typicalness, so that even one who is reading Wilde for the first time, or is merely superficially acquainted with his works, is little likely to pass them by unregarded, mere trifles though they are. The few quotations subjoined may serve in illustration.— »... all the supreme masters of style... are the supreme masters of spiritual and intellectual vision also.» (*Essays*, p. 143). »The public imagine that, because they are interested in their immediate surroundings, Art should be interested in them also...» (*Int.* p. 16). »... there has never been a creative age that has not been critical also.» (*Ibid.* p. 124). »... not merely the beauty that men look at, but the beauty that men listen to also...» (*Ibid.* p. 147). »The separation of spirit from matter was a mystery, and the union of spirit with matter was a mystery also.» (*Dorian Gray*, p. 68). »The joy of Beatrice was my joy, and the sorrows of Cordelia were mine also.» (*Ibid* p. 97). »Literature must

rest always on a principle . . .» (*Essays*, p. 130). » . . while the poet can be pictorial or not, as he chooses, the painter must be pictorial always.» (*Int.* pp. 147—148). » The artistic critic, like the mystic, is an antinomian always.» (*Ibid.* p. 214). » . . Truth is independent of facts always . . .» (*Ibid.* pp. 246—247).

The placing of the adverb in some of these passages, as in others not quoted here, may be owing simply to reasons of euphony; just as considerations of an identical order may have led to the preference, in some cases, of *also* to another word. But it seems more natural to explain it by a reference to that tendency towards emphasizing things and throwing things into vigorous and brilliant relief which is a distinguishing note of all Wilde's work. It is, therefore, interesting to note that, on this point, Pater, in whom there was no such tendency predominant, and whose methods of composition were on the whole very different, offers a close parallel to Wilde. Pater, too, seems to have had a kind of fancy for that word, *also*, for winding up sentences by an *also*. Just as Wilde does, he very frequently places *always* after the principal verb in a compound tense, or, when it modifies an adjective, immediately after it, as shown by the following examples.—» . . as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also . . .» (*Ren.* p. 235). » . . over and above the real Giorgione and his authentic extant works, there remains the *Giorgionesque* also . . .» (*Ibid.* p. 148). » . . the disintegrating, centrifugal influence . . has laid hold on the life of the gods also.» (*Greek Studies*, Lo. 1895, p. 120). » . . associated with the forms and odours of flower and fruit, yet as one risen from the dead also.» (*Ibid* p. 139). » An undefinable taint of death had clung always about him . . .» (*Ren.* p. 238). » . . one who had been always so desirous of beauty, but desired it always in such precise and definite forms . . .» (*Ibid.* p. 129). » . . a system of abstraction

which aimed always at the broad and general type...» (*Ibid.* p. 66). »How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus. . .?» (*Ibid.* p. 236). »He is just a little pedantic, true always to his own express judgment . . .» (*Ibid.* p. 168). I have no desire to insist on the analogy pointed out here; as Wilde himself says somewhere, »there is no surer way of destroying a similarity than to strain it.» What probabilities there are of its being due to anything but mere chance, may be over-emphasized. I merely wish to say that I think it is just within the limits of possibility that Wilde, when writing as he did, besides following a natural inclination, was actuated also by some vague reminiscence of the precedent set by Pater.—

We have yet to examine whether Wilde was indebted to Pater for anything in the domain of phraseology and vocabulary,—beyond such points as may already have been incidentally mentioned above. I shall confine myself to a single detail of the question, one, however, which strikes me as the most important and salient one; and, as far as Pater is concerned, shall draw my quotations from his essay on Leonardo, as that contains all the materials necessary for a proper illustration of the matter. Let us return again for a moment to the passage dealing with »La Gioconda.» The strange seduction of that astounding page, its intense and haunting suggestiveness, must be ascribed, we feel, in no small measure, to the emphasis with which the disquieting or »morbid» elements of the picture are dwelt upon. That beauty, we are told, is »the deposit . . of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions,» and into it »the soul with all its maladies has passed.» »Like the vampire,» that woman »has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave.» The whole paragraph is supremely significant of the mode in which Pater looked upon Leonardo and his work. And throughout the essay we may catch the same

characteristic note again, in single brief touches, as well as in a few passages of greater length. Thus, for example, when he says of the painter, that to those around him he seemed »possessed of curious secrets and a hidden knowledge,» or that he offered, for a price, to tell Ludovico Sforza »strange secrets in the art of war,» or again, when he speaks of the »fantastic, changeful, and dreamlike» population that moved in the streets of Milan in Leonardo's time, their »life of brilliant sins and exquisite amusements,» »the exotic flowers of sentiment» that grew there. A somewhat similar impression disengages itself from the following lines, with their subtle analysis of Leonardo's »type of womanly beauty»:—

Nervous, electric, faint always with some inexplicable faintness, these people seem to be subject to exceptional conditions, to feel powers at work in the common air unfelt by others, to become, as it were, the receptacle of them, and pass them on to us in a chain of secret influences. (p. 116).

Now, there are pages in Wilde, as in »The Critic as Artist,» or *Dorian Gray*, that include passages of a type distinctly reminiscent, in their phraseology, of those just quoted, and all redolent of the influence of Pater's earlier and more sensuous style. For instance:—

After playing Chopin, I feel as if I had been weeping over sins that I had never committed, and mourning over tragedies that were not my own... I can fancy a man who had led a perfectly commonplace life, hearing by chance some curious piece of music, and suddenly discovering that his soul, without his being conscious of it, had passed through terrible

experiences, and known fearful joys, or wild romantic loves, or great renunciations. (*Int.* p. 100).

or,—

Read the whole book, suffer it to tell even one of its secrets to your soul, and your soul will grow eager to know more, and will feed upon poisonous honey, and seek to repent of strange crimes of which it is guiltless, and to make atonement for terrible pleasures that it has never known. (*Ibid.* p. 166).

There is no necessity to dwell at any length on this resemblance. Words may be borrowed, being common property; the living spirit which imparts to them a richer expressiveness, and knows alone how to use them in a way in which they have never been used before,—this cannot be thus transferred or appropriated. Wilde, we have seen, in terms the immediate derivation and precise source of which there can be little doubt about, enjoys speaking of curious sins and unutterable secrets, of evil »full of wonder,» of strange experiences one has never really had, evoked suddenly, at exquisite moments, by a strain of music, some line of poetry, a nothing. Much like Pater, he marks his artistic temperament or »dilettantish» attitude, by applying to certain nouns epithets denoting the aesthetic qualities of the things thus designated, without any implicate moral criticism, or reference to an ethical standard (cf. Pater's »exquisite passions,» »brilliant sins»). Yet, how different the impression conveyed by Pater's essay, even by those passages in it that furnished the material of the parallel drawn! What a strange dreaminess hovering about the piece, relieved piquantly by just a faint tinge of antiquarianism, a certain punctiliousness of historical and technical detail! How subtly suggestive it all is of a spiritualized sensuousness, a mind

aerial, lingering, as if spellbound and half-regretful, in contemplation of earthly beauty! It gives us, with graphic touches, the outer data of a very remarkable life passed in an age unrivalled for its glamour and intensity of passion. And beyond these scraps of biography,—by what cunning of delicate allusion are we made to feel the ambiguous and doubtful elements of that life, its dreamy detachment and sudden moves and quaint retirements, its curious mixture of quietism and restlessness, the uncertainty in which we are about the man's real nature! How really little Wilde has, and must have, of that,—here as elsewhere! Nothing, here, to set us dreamily gazing before us. No vague, shifting backgrounds, irradiant with a fitful glow, on which shadowy people pass hurriedly or with dainty languid step, to gratify some nameless desire of their heart, or as if sunk in a vision of a strange, far-off beauty...

It may be convenient to ask here whether Pater's obvious fondness for, and, in some cases, very striking use of, individual words is in any way reflected in the writings of Wilde. Let us take, as presumably the fittest subject for a cursory comparison, a few terms chiefly denoting various degrees of aesthetic excellence, such a *lovely*, *charming(-ly)*, *fascinating*, *delightful*, *wonderful(-ly)*, *exquisite(-ly)*, *delicate(-ly)*, *sweet(-ly)*. Of these, the three first-mentioned occur rather sparingly in Pater; in Wilde very often. *Delightful*, *wonderful*, and *exquisite* are all of them frequent in Pater, in Wilde extremely so. As for the remaining two, neither of them, it appears, was much of a favourite with Wilde, whereas both stand out prominently in the very front-rank of Pater's pet idioms, and thus acquire a sort of symptomatic significance. For does not each denote a quality we would willingly attribute to such a book as *Marius the Epicurean*? And are we not justified in saying, by way of a general criticism, that

with all its distinction and high standard of technical perfection, Wilde's work falls a little short of these very things, — *sweetness* and *delicacy*? (Mannerisms such as »delicate grassy places,» »delicate perspective,» »delicate sea-coasts,» »the delicate power of the Latin tongue,» etc., have no analogues whatever in Wilde).

In conclusion, let me quote, without further remark, a few passages from *Dorian Gray*, vaguely suggestive, in choice of words and arrangement of sentences, in certain more delicate touches, of Pater's manner generally, though not, as far as I can see, of any particular passages. Of course, these are no isolated specimens. Any reader of Wilde who is at all sensible to these kinds of analogy, will easily augment their number.

... the mere shapes and patterns of things becoming, as it were, refined, and gaining a kind of symbolical value, as though they were themselves patterns of some other and more perfect form whose shadow they made real... (*Dorian Gray*, p. 45).

He never knew... that somewhat grotesque dread of mirrors, and polished metal surfaces, and still water, which came upon the young Parisian so early in his life... (*Ibid.* p. 143).

And, certainly, to him Life itself was the first, the greatest, of the arts, and for it all the other arts seemed to be but a preparation. (*Ibid.* p. 145).

And now for a brief summing up! This, then, was what I proposed to do in the present paper: to study some of the prose-writings of Wilde as influenced, formally, by those of Pater, to try to ascertain, by comparing a number

of parallel passages, how far the style of the former would seem to be conditioned by the latter, both in the process of formation, as represented by the American lectures, etc., and also in its stage of ultimate perfection, the chief exponent of which I take to be *Intentions* (or, more properly speaking, the parts of it originally published in 1889 and 1890). The various facts brought forward in the course of this examination all point towards the same conclusions, which are, briefly stated, these: — The American lectures, (chiefly that on »The English Renaissance«), as well as some other slighter work belonging to the same period, are all crammed with reminiscences and plagiarisms of Pater's essays on the Renaissance, and in every sense seem to justify an utterance of Wilde himself concerning these essays,—that they became to him »'the golden book of spirit and sense, the holy writ of beauty'.« Though cleverly written, we cannot regard them as anything but mere youthful tentatives, and may take Mr Ross's word for it, that the author never contemplated their publishing. The following years of his life, up to 1889, were a time of preparation and ripening. Nearly all of his journalistic work he did in these years; and there can be little doubt that the about a hundred articles he contributed to the *Pall Mall Gazette* and some other papers between 1885 and 1890, very much furthered the development of his critical talent and his power of literary expression. Many of these reviews, as might be expected, contain passages that were obviously inspired by memories of Pater. Then, in 1889 and 1890,¹⁾ came his great achievements in aesthetic criticism, the essays reprinted, together with »The Truth of Masks,« as *Intentions* in 1891. Never was Wilde more daringly himself than in this extraordinarily

¹⁾ About this time, it appears, Wilde and Pater (who took a house in London in 1885, and there spent his vacations for the following eight years) saw a great deal of one another.

clever and fascinating book, the embodiment of his brightest and happiest thinking on a favourite subject above all others; nowhere so triumphantly did he realize his lordship of language. Yet literary reminiscences are as rife here, maybe, as anywhere in his earlier work. And just as the intellectual attitude reflected by Pater's *Renaissance* was, in a sense, the starting-point of that of the author of *Intentions*, so in the latter work there are, besides a number of passages that have their actual counterpart in the other book, certain peculiarities of phraseology and style that would miss their right explanation unless accounted for by a reference to Pater. This is particularly true of »The Critic as Artist.« *The Soul of Man* (1891), too, on isolated points distinctly re-echoes Pater. As regards *De Profundis*, finally, the circumstances in which it was written would seem to exclude the probability of any literary influence having been actively at work during its composition, apart from the obvious *leit-motif* of scriptural origin. In fact, neither in its sphere of ideas, nor in the artful and exquisite simplicity of its prose, is there much to remind one of Pater.

II. 1)

In »The Critic as Artist,« Wilde alludes to Matthew Arnold as »one whose gracious memory we all revere, and the music of whose pipe once lured Proserpina from her Sicilian fields, and made those white feet stir, and not in vain, the Cumnor cowslips.« This daintily-worded eulogy is more than an elegant obituary compliment in praise of a distinguished fellow-craftsman, more than a mere formal recognition of the merits of one literary man by another. It implies, or might be taken to imply, an acknowledgment of the conscious debt of gratitude that he owed to one whose influence, of such paramount importance to the intellectual development of his country, had meant so much for his own development also, both as an aesthetic critic and as a prose-writer. In fact, out of the number of authors to whom, in either of these capacities, he was particularly indebted, Matthew Arnold may certainly claim one of the foremost places. I am even aware that among certain of his friends who were in the habit of discussing his works with him, the opinion is prevalent that there is more of Arnold in him than of anyone else, more even than of Pater and Ruskin, »in both style, phraseology, and thought.«²⁾ This may well be so; though, speaking for myself, I should say that, as far as his general attitude, his faculty of seeing things in their beautiful and seizing aspects, is concerned, not to mention other

¹⁾ First published in 1913.

²⁾ Mr. Sherard, in a letter to myself. This opinion is shared by Mr. Ross, as he assures me.

and more special points, his relationship to Pater is more striking still, —and this, by the way, seems to me to be the view taken by Wilde himself, judging by various statements made in his works. There can be little doubt that to Wilde Pater's personality was decidedly the more interesting of the two, and that Pater's writings appeared to him in the light of hardly approachable models of consummate outward form and high intellectual aim, exercising upon him, as he himself acknowledged, a curious fascination from which he was, perhaps, never quite able to free himself. How far his aesthetic creed, his methods of aesthetic criticism, were based upon the teaching of Pater, the initiated will know. His general standpoint may be defined as that of an aesthetic individualist. Well, if individualist he was by temperament and turn of mind, his aestheticism, so far as worked out to a theory or system, derived in a great measure from the hedonistic art-philosophy of Pater, as embodied, chiefly, in his essays on the Renaissance.

What, then, were the ties of spiritual sympathy or kinship that united Wilde to Arnold? In what sense, to what extent, may he be said to be indebted to Arnold? We may gather, from the passage quoted at starting, from its terms of eloquent praise, its tone of a genuine and sincere liking, what was his attitude towards one side, at least, of the man's work. For the *poet* Arnold, indeed, Wilde always, — at least until after his imprisonment, — entertained a great admiration, although in his own poetry I do not think there are as many echoes of Arnold as of some other poets,¹⁾ — the

¹⁾ The following are obvious parallels: — »God knows it, I am with you.» (Arnold, »To a Republican Friend, 1848.») — ».. These Christs that die upon the barricades, God knows it I am with them, in some things.» (Wilde, »Sonnet to Liberty.»). »Seeing this Vale, this Earth, whereon we dream..» (Arnold, Second Sonnet »To a Republican Friend.») — ».. Seeing this little isle on which we stand ..» (Wilde, »To Milton.»). ».. and all the

masters he himself followed most closely belonged to quite a different world, and his own poetical manner never had much of Arnold in it. »*Thyrsis*,» he says somewhere, »will never be forgotten,» it has »that note of distinction that is so rare in these days of violence, exaggeration and rhetoric.» And in *De Profundis* he speaks of the »clear note of lyrical beauty» in Arnold's song. But it was not by the soft and chastened beauty of his verse that Arnold appealed most strongly to him, it was not through his achievements in poetry that Arnold came to exert such a profound influence on his intellectual development. It was in his capacity of a gallant and untiring combatant of British Philistinism; it was as an upholder, against narrow-minded insularity and national prejudice, of the notion of »a free play of the mind upon all subjects» as a pleasure in itself, and for its own sake; it was, finally, as a refined artist in prose and delightful essay-writer. Arnold, emphatically a »soldier of light,» just as Wilde was one, in »truth and the highest culture» would hail the one means of deliverance from silly middle-class respectability with its »incomparable self-satisfaction,» from »the vulgarity of the Philistines and brutality of the Populace» alike. Arnold, too, had realized, and, indeed, had spent the better half of a lifetime in trying to make others realize, that there is such a thing as a sphere of the pure and unimpassioned mind.

marvel of the golden skies.» (Arnold, »*Thyrsis*.») — »... and all the glory of the stars.» (Wilde, »*At Verona*»). It might be noted by the way that that wonderful passage in *De Profundis*, — »When one has weighed the sun in the balance, and measured the steps of the moon, and mapped out the seven heavens star by star, there still remains oneself,» was clearly inspired by this stanza in Arnold's »*Empedocles on Etna*,» —

Look, the world tempts our eye,
And we would know it all!
We map the starry sky,
We mine this earthen ball,
We measure the sea-tides, we number the sea-sands.

with laws and issues of its own, and with which the demands and aspirations of the practical life have nothing whatsoever to do. One continuous inciting and educating of the public mind towards a higher clearness, culture, dignity, and self-consciousness, — an attempt, then, at a »resurrection of the general Socratic attitude,» (as somebody has put it), that is what Arnold's criticism essentially amounts to; and it was precisely in its character of a *general* criticism, a »criticism of life,» that it came to have an influence on Wilde, and not so much through its bearings upon the various provinces of human activity to which it was actually applied. The difference, in this respect, between the two men is striking and characteristic. Wilde's point of view was that of the artist, the individualist *à outrance*, was never anything but that, could not be anything but that.¹⁾ Arnold's was that of a man who, besides pursuing the scheme of a refined and noble self-culture he has worked out for himself, takes an interest in the affairs of his fellow-creatures at large: a man of intense humanitarian and social preoccupations, a moralist, a »lover of man's perfection,» a patriot even. Wilde's chief work in criticism

¹⁾A good deal of fuss has been made about Wilde's »socialism,» as revealed, supposedly, in *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (as it was called upon its appearance in the *Fortnightly Review*, the words *under Socialism* being omitted, characteristically enough, in the reprints). How amongst »the very poorest and most forlorn, and most desperate of the helots of Europe, the Jews of Russia and Poland, Oscar Wilde, known to them only as the author of this essay,» has come to be »regarded in the light of a prophet, a benefactor, a saint» (R. H. Sherard), I must say I fail to understand. Whatever one may be pleased to read out of, or into, *The Soul of Man*, this work should certainly not be acclaimed for any kind of Socialist propaganda. An intermediate and passing stage between the old economic and social system that is believed to be breaking up now, and a fancied Individualism of the far future, a dreamed »Utopia for dandies,» Socialism meant that much to Wilde, and no more; and it was chiefly as a means of attaining to such a state of things that it had any meaning or interest at all for him.

was in the sphere of aesthetic criticism. The critical activity of Arnold, resting, to quote his own words, on »an uncommonly large view of human perfection,» and on a much wider range of practical experience, embraced such numerous and varied fields as politics, social economy, education, theology, and literature, and in each of these was, more or less, that of a professional man.

Even in that special field of aesthetic criticism where it is most natural to compare them and to seek for resemblances and contacts, these latter, I think, minute and abundant though they are, are less conspicuous, both as regards significance and number, than the many points on which they so radically differ. For if, as has been well said, Arnold's criticism is »eminently the antithesis of impressionist criticism,» and, practically, consists in the application, as »a test and measure of quality and worth,» of »certain definite ideas, held with elastic firmness but not developed into any set of procrustean principles,¹⁾ exactly the reverse might be said with equal truth about Wilde, whose criticism was as clearly and unmistakably of an »impressionist» turn as Arnold's was not,²⁾ and who recognized no such arbitrary canons, imposed beforehand, as a measure of the excellence of a work of art, but held rather, with Wainewright, (the subject of one of his best essays), that »no work of art can be tried otherwise than by laws deduced from itself». »A disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world,»—there is Arnold's definition of criticism. According to Wilde, aesthetic criticism was not only

¹⁾ W. C. Brownell, *Victorian Prose Masters* (Lo. 1902, p. 161).

²⁾ If we were to look about for any foreign parallels, the impressionist and »dilettantish» criticism of Lemaître or of An. France would suggest itself naturally, as emanating from a kindred spirit, and resting, in the last instance, on the same principle of the absolute subjectivity and accidentality of all aesthetic impressions.

not a mere handmaiden of the arts, — a vehicle for the promotion and knowledge of what, in art or literature, is known or thought to be »the best in the world,» nor yet a means of rightly interpreting and penetrating into the individual work of art, but, when of the highest kind,—as an independent, imaginative, or »creative» criticism,—nothing short of the supreme literary art. It was his belief that the one thing we are really concerned about in art, is what the work of artistic creation is to us at a certain definite moment. A work of art, if we are to derive from it the greatest possible amount of pleasure, should be approached at the due moment and with appropriate emotions; should rely, for its power of influence, on a subtle correspondence and delicate harmony between itself and our own actual state of mind, irrespective of whether it comes up, or not, to any preconceived notion we may have of a higher or a less high aesthetic excellence,—in fact, the doctrine of the *μονόχροος ήδονή*, »the pleasure of the ideal now,» as applied, in a somewhat narrower acceptance than that given to it by Pater, to the conditions of artistic enjoyment, and adapted to the exigencies of a temperament more keenly susceptible to the sensuous beauty of things. There was about Wilde's criticism nothing that reminds one of the conscientious reviewer or the professional writer on matters aesthetic. True, he spoke authoritatively. His manner was *sans réplique*. He had all the aplomb and resourcefulness of the trained dialectician and a brilliant talker. He wanted to carry his point, and to carry it always with the utmost brilliancy of argument. But he was no doctrinaire. What apparent harshness or want of true liberality there might be about his paradoxes, is a matter of style only, and the favourite mask of that most versatile and impressionable spirit, — a piquant enough contrast, at which we may be sure he himself was not the one least amused. The motley host of writers and artists for whom he professed an admiration, or by whom

he was actually influenced, sufficiently proves the width and variety of his sympathies and the eclecticism of his tastes.

It has been said of Arnold that he had no temperament, and that he »lacked the edge at least of the aesthetic faculty.»¹⁾ I have no doubt that this is so, and that this is what really makes him inferior to Wilde as a writer on purely aesthetical subjects. He was rather too much of an intellectualist in his relations to Art. His perception of poetic beauty, while not, perhaps, of the widest range, was less in the nature of a fine frenzy of ecstatic intuition or unpremeditated abandonment than a delicate and meditative *Empathie*, a conscious and carefully balanced estimate; and thus his impressions of this or that poem, when transmitted to paper, came to lack that vivacity and freshness which, despite all artifice of style, are a never-failing attraction in all Wilde's criticism. Take his essay on »The Study of Poetry,» in *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series (but first published in 1880). This, like most of the papers included in the same volume, contains, it is needless to say, much that is excellent, true, and solid. It is admirable alike for its clear common sense and its complete mastery of method, for fairness of estimate no less than for strength and fineness of insight. It could have been written only by a thoroughly cultured man, a born lover of fine literature. But it does not *fascinate*. A wearisome repetition of words and phrases, a certain hardness or dryness in the presentation of the facts, as it were give prominence to what is apt to strike one as the essential weakness in the treatment of the subject-matter,—a lack of intenseness or energy in the realization of those very facts, and that faint touch of pedantry rarely quite absent from anything he wrote in criticism, and which reminds us that in expounding or analysing literature his object was always partly didactic.

¹⁾ Brownell, *op. cit.* pp. 155, 156.

Arnold wrote a style remarkable for its cultivated grace, its refined simplicity of diction, and equable balance of sense and phrase. A style very little »aesthetic,» with nothing voluptuous or sensuous about it, with no great flexibility of joint or freedom of movement, and without any striking pictorial, suggestive, or rhythmical qualities; a thing of mainly intellectual appeal. In point of vocabulary and syntax,—apart from certain mannerisms, some of which will be mentioned in the following pages,—the very pattern of elegant sobriety, erring rather on the side of regularity and orderliness, than in seeking variety or embellishments. A style, in short, instinct with every charm of high breeding, of excellent (though not infallible) taste, of finely attempered humour, but decidedly, whether judged by the beauty of its material, or measured by its width and energy of expression, of an inferior order to that of Wilde at his best. As writers of prose they are, in reality, hardly amenable to the same rule; and it would be idle to push this parallel further, and to quarrel with the one for lacking the merits of the other, since after all they pursued very different aims, and each, in his own line of work, achieved remarkable things. Wilde was an artistic writer, Arnold was not. He had,—as even friendly and warmly appreciative critics seem ready to admit,¹⁾ just that faint suspicion of the Philistine in himself that would ever have prevented him from becoming an artistic writer. To the former, everything relative to the technique of his art was a matter of prime importance, and a source of intense fascination. For Arnold, preoccupations about form never had such an absorbing interest. He wrote, not so much for the pleasure of the thing, for the sheer delight in beautiful expression, as to enforce some precept of »conduct,» to clear the national mind of prejudice, and advance by a

¹⁾ Cf. Swinburne, *Essays and Studies* (Lo. 1875, pp. 147—148).

step the culture of his age and his country. And perhaps the highest praise that we can give him as a prose-writer is that he succeeded, however barely, in making such a work as *Literature and Dogma*, and others of its class, readable.

Nevertheless, in spite of this difference of turn of mind and of temperament, of intellectual aims as of actual literary achievements, these two writers, as is well known, had many things in common; and it would indeed be hard to overrate the influence exercised by the one upon the other,—however much, by a something diffuse and vague about it, that influence may baffle our attempts at any elaborate analysis or precise estimate. A comparison thus limited and qualified beforehand will, then, hardly require any *apologia*. It was an influence of thought, and it was an influence of style. And though it is with the latter chiefly that we are concerned here, it may be desirable to premise a few remarks of a nature to show on what numerous points Wilde's criticism is reminiscent of, and may be traced back to, Arnold.

It will have escaped few readers' notice that the double-dialogue entitled »The Critic as Artist,» in *Intentions*, was obviously written under the influence of Arnold's essay on »The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,» in *Essays in Criticism* (1st ed. 1865). Not only was a dictum by Arnold the starting-point of that discourse of *Ernest* and *Gilbert* on the essence of criticism which makes up the first part of the dialogue, and the formula in which, at the end of their conversation, *Ernest* sums up his friend's theory about criticism being the highest form of creation, simply the exact reversal of that dictum and another much-quoted saying of Arnold's, but all through the dialogue we come across phrases and passages, — some of little importance in themselves, others weighty of argument and touching upon essential points of the matter in debate, — which were evidently suggested by things in Arnold's essay. It is not, of course, a question

of plagiarism. There may be some deliberate borrowings: I believe there always are in Wilde's works. And, no doubt, while composing his dialogue, he was conscious in a general way of either agreeing with, or dissenting from, Arnold; as, indeed, we are already forewarned by frequent references, open and implicit, to that writer. Most of these phrases and passages, however striking the analogy in some cases, bespeak an influence far more penetrating and deep-going than any that is mirrored through the coarse medium of plagiarism, — an influence now patent and palpable, betraying itself by a close correspondence of expression and of thought, at other times little more than an ambiguous and evasive element, hovering lingeringly, as it were, about a page, and of which we become aware through some pale reminiscence of phrasing merely, some delicate and dubious accent that we fancy we recognize. It is vaguely present, we feel, in these words of *Gilbert's*: —

. . . who [is] the true man of culture, if not he who by fine scholarship and fastidious rejection has made instinct self-conscious and intelligent, and can separate the work that has distinction from the work that has it not, and so by contact and comparison makes himself master of the secrets of style and school, and understands their meanings, and listens to their voices, and develops that spirit of disinterested curiosity¹⁾ which is the real root, as it is the real flower, of the intellectual life, and thus attains to intellectual clarity, and, having learned 'the best

¹⁾ In his memoir on Wainewright, Wilde speaks again of »that fine spirit of disinterested curiosity to which we owe so many charming studies of the great criminals of the Italian Renaissance, « from the pens of several distinguished writers whom he mentions.—Cf. »The disinterested curiosity, the *humanism* of the Renascence, are not characteristics of Milton, « etc. Arnold, *Mixed Essays* (L.O. 1879, p. 195).

that is known and thought in the world,' lives—it is not fanciful to say so—with those who are the Immortals.¹⁾

The elegant *rondeur* of this period, the finely balanced parallelism of its sentences, the complete equilibrium of its appeal to the mind and the senses alike, the alliterations and other tricks,—all these are Wilde's, all are hall-marked in no mistakable way with the seal of their provenience. Yet the piece has about it, in two or three points, a faint suggestion of a passage in Arnold's essay, where, with less finish of phrase, and in a more matter-of-fact way, somewhat similar things are dwelt upon:—

It is noticeable that the word *curiosity*, which in other languages is used in a good sense, to mean, as a high and fine quality of man's nature, just this disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake, . . . has in our language no sense of the kind . . . (*Essays in Criticism*, Lo, 1865, pp. 16—17).

That famous catchword, too, »a free play of the mind,« — and who can henceforth hear of »a free play of the mind« without associating the thing with the name of Arnold?—was, of course, readily echoed by Wilde. »Anything approaching to the free play of the mind,« says *Gilbert* a little further on (p. 214), »is practically unknown amongst us,« which is merely a »revised version« of,— »The notion of the free play of the mind upon all subjects being a pleasure in itself, being an object of desire, . . . hardly enters into an Englishman's thoughts.« (*Ess. Crit.* p. 16). And when told that »There

¹⁾ *Intentions* (Lo. 1911, p. 175).

was never a time when Criticism was more needed than it is now» (*Int.* p. 209), that »It is Criticism that makes us cosmopolitan» (*Ibid.* p. 211), and that »Intellectual criticism will bind Europe together in bonds far closer than those that can be forged by shopman or sentimentalists.» (*Ibid.* p. 213), we are at once struck by the similarity in meaning of these passages with the following two in Arnold: — » . . . ‘almost the last thing for which one would come to English literature is just that very thing which now Europe most desires—criticism’» (p. 1), and, » . . . the criticism I am really concerned with . . . is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result;» (p. 39). Again, these lines in *Intentions* (p. 182):—

The great majority of people . . . rank themselves naturally on the side of that splendid system that elevates them to the dignity of machines, and rage so wildly against the intrusion of the intellectual faculty into any question that concerns life, that one is tempted to define man as a rational animal who always loses his temper when he is called upon to act in accordance with the dictates of reason.

These, I say, not only have a resemblance of sense and style to, but doubtless were actually inspired by, a passage in Arnold,—

The Englishman has been called a political animal, and he values what is political and practical so much that ideas easily become objects of dislike in his eyes, and thinkers “miscreants,” because ideas and thinkers have rashly meddled with politics and practice. (*Ess. Crit.* p. 16).

And *Gilbert's* contention, put forward in the usual paradoxical and pointed way, that it is »very much more difficult to talk about a thing than to do it,» and that action »is always easy» (p. 128), was really anticipated when Arnold exclaimed, with Goethe,—»To act is so easy . . ; to think is so hard!» (p. 27).

It will be observed that in these parallels (the number of which might of course be considerably swelled) there is an obvious correspondence of meaning and, to a certain extent, one of phrasing, that there is a reminiscence of thought here and, partly, one of style, but that in each instance we have also, in Wilde's rendering of the thing, an element that is *not* reminiscence, that does not suggest any influence whatever, but is absolutely his own. We are, in reality, on this particular point, under much the same impression as with regard to Wilde's work generally,—that, viewed from the intellectual side alone, it is very largely of derivative inspiration, and that its chief distinction is not a profound originality of view and thought, but is wholly on the side of style, in that extraordinary brilliancy of execution and technical mastership that make us, while comparatively indifferent to *what* he says, intensely interested in *how* he says it. He probably never originated a single really great idea on any subject whatsoever, his leading thoughts on morals, on social economy, or on aesthetic criticism being in the main but such as were current or floating about, grasped firmly or but vaguely apprehended, among wide numbers of cultivated men of his generation. But it may be fairly questioned whether certain of these thoughts, none of which was, strictly speaking, his, have received more pregnant and eloquent expression in the works of any other writer within the last half century. It is, then, in his sole capacity of an artist in language that he strikes out a fresh vein, and is really to be counted with, and the quality of the intellectual

enjoyment we derive from his work is essentially determined by his gift of assimilation and his talent for adaptation. To appreciate him fully is to appreciate him in his relationship with other writers and thinkers. Clever in themselves, the clever things he wrote and said are all the more admirable for surpassing the clever sayings of some one else, for being hit upon, as it were, in a last spirited effort at outdoing himself and outdoing others. He had that brilliant gift of rhetoric and turn for the epigrammatic, which, if turned to account by literary genius, constitutes a most powerful intellectual stimulant, and if denied the final applause is certain, at least, to secure a provisional triumph and the last word but one. In the subtle art of making much out of nothing and infinities out of a little, he was without rivals in this or in any age. Where others leave off, there Wilde steps in boldly, and lo! from the sound and solid ground-work of some well-established philosophy there soon aspires »through dizzy air» that astounding structure of fallacy and paradox, of truths distorted, and truisms shrewdly disguised into so many sophistries, bewildering reason, defying common sense. With him, just as contradicting himself meant merely variety of pose and versatility of attitude, contradicting others was simply a method of asserting his own independence of thought,—as far as it went. He undertook to disprove the theory of another, just to prove his own to be true at the same time. Hence the touch of frivolity and flippancy there is about much of his criticism. Hence the reason why the duller sort of readers generally refuse to take him »in earnest,» opposing, to his spirit of intellectual playfulness and artistic detachment, their own ponderous obtuseness and lack of imaginative instinct.

Perhaps all this is nowhere better instanced than in the case of the first part of »The Critic as Artist.» For this, if we consider the subject-matter alone, and of it the essen-

tial only, actually amounts to an attempt at refuting these two propositions of Arnold's,—that criticism ranks lower than creation, and that the aim of criticism is to help us to see the object »as in itself it really is». This controversial purpose is kept clearly and steadily in view throughout the essay, amid all the apparent accidents of the dialogue and the roaming fancies of the two talkers, and round it pivots the whole amazing complex of pleasant ingenuities, of elaborate exposition and opulent illustration, and fine flights of eloquence,—seemingly without any preconceived order or prevailing principle, as in any real conversation, but in fact subserving the same end, and brought to bear with dexterous art upon the main issue. That this is so, I can think of no better way of showing, at once simply and effectively, than by printing parallelly, on the one side, the two or three passages in Arnold referred to above, and over against these a number of quotations from Wilde's essay representing, in its principal stages, the development of his theory, from the point of departure down to the crowning epigram, in which, after a fine climaxing of argument, it becomes ultimately crystallized.

Arnold.

Everybody . . . would be willing to admit, as a general proposition, that the critical faculty is lower than the inventive. (*Ess. Crit.* p. 3).

The critical power is of lower rank than the creative. (p. 4).

Wilde.

Gilbert. The antithesis between them is entirely arbitrary. Without the critical faculty, there is no artistic creation at all, worthy of the name. (*Int.* p. 121.)

.. Criticism is itself an art. And just as artistic creation implies the working of the critical faculty, and, indeed, without it cannot be said to

exist at all, so Criticism is really creative in the highest sense of the word. Criticism is, in fact, both creative and independent... The critic occupies the same relation to the work of art that he criticises as the artist does to the visible world of form and colour, or the unseen world of passion and of thought. (pp. 137—138).

... the highest Criticism, being the purest form of personal impression, is in its way more creative than creation, as it has least reference to any standard external to itself, and is, in fact, its own reason for existing, and, as the Greeks would put it, in itself, and to itself, an end. (p. 139).

[the critic's] sole aim is to chronicle his own impressions. (p. 140).

It is the business of the critical power... “in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is.” (pp. 5—6).

... it has been said by one whose gracious memory we all revere... that the proper aim of Criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is. But this is a very serious error, and takes no cognisance of Criticism's most

perfect form, which is in its essence purely subjective, and seeks to reveal its own secret and not the secret of another. For the highest Criticism deals with art not as expressive but as impressive purely. (pp. 140—141).

[criticism of the highest kind] treats the work of art simply as a starting-point for a new creation. (p. 143).

Ernest. The highest Criticism, then, is more creative than creation, and the primary aim of the critic is to see the object as in itself it really is not; that is your theory, I believe? (pp. 145—146).

Gilbert. Yes, that is my theory. (p. 146).

I am not going to strain the analogy pointed out here by adducing yet further instances in proof of what should already be quite clear; but just to round off, I will dwell for a moment on a few other examples from the works just cited and from various other productions by the two writers, of a somewhat similar parallelism.

In »The Decay of Lying,» we are told that »To look at a thing is very different from seeing a thing,» for »One does not see anything until one sees its beauty.» (*Int.* p. 39). This, reduced to »what in its essence it really is,» and stript

of its vestment of epigram ad paradox, is exactly what Arnold means when he says, with a reference to Keats, that »to see things in their beauty is to see things in their truth,» (*Ess. Crit. Sec. Ser. Lo. 1888*, p. 116), beauty being »only truth seen from another side,» (*Ess. Crit. p. XVIII*); or when he says of Joubert, the French philosopher and moralist (*Ibid. p. 231*), that he had »clearly seized the fine and just idea that beauty and light are properties of truth, and that truth is incompletely exhibited if it is exhibited without beauty and light,» or, quoting from the same author, speaks of those spirits »who maintain that, to see and exhibit things in beauty, is to see and show things as in their essence they really are . . .» (*Ibid. p. 232*). — The following three passages in »The Critic as Artist» may be looked upon as variations on one that occurs in Arnold:— »It is to the critical instinct that we owe each new school that springs up, each new mould that art finds ready to its hand.» (*Int. p. 124*). »Each new school, as it appears, cries out against criticism, but it is to the critical faculty in man that it owes its origin.» (*Ibid. p. 125*). »An age that has no criticism is either an age in which art is immobile, hieratic, and confined to the reproduction of formal types, or an age that possesses no art at all.» (*Ibid. p. 124*). This is a little more detailed, but amounts in substance to what Arnold meant to convey by his remark that »the creation of a modern poet, to be worth much, implies a great critical effort behind it; else it must be a comparatively poor, barren, and short-lived affair.» (*Ess. Crit. p. 6*). — There is, in Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* (*Lo. 1873*, p. 369), a paragraph beginning, »So true is this,» etc., and containing a sort of historical parallel between the religious conditions of the English community of the writer's own day, and »the state of things presented in Judæa when Christ came,» intended to prove that the representatives and sections of the former, bishops and dogmatists, Protestant

Dissenters, philosophical Liberals, and so forth, were quite as bad in every way as those of the latter,— the chief priests and elders, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Roman governor. Though the resemblance is possibly a chance one, it strikes me as more probable that there is some reminiscence of this in the passage in *De Profundis* (pp. 88—90) where, in terms not very different from these, but with a note of personal bitterness that was not in Arnold, Wilde denounces the British Philistine, his own enemy and judge, as the shameful counterpart of those Jews of Jerusalem who killed Christ. I refer the reader to the passages in question as, on account of their length, neither of them is suitable for quotation here.

There are, of course, numerous other instances, but I do not know they are worth taking much notice of. It might be pointed out, for instance, that in Wilde's definition of the aesthetic instinct as »that unerring instinct that reveals to one all things under their conditions of beauty» (*Int.* p. 202), there is some reappearance of Arnold's more famous and much-contested characterization of poetry as »a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty» (*Ess. Crit.* II, p. 5,—repeated almost *verbatim*, on pp. 48 and 140—141); that »cultivated idleness» (Wilde, *Miscellanies*, Libr. ed. Lo. 1908, p. 154) and »cultivated leisure» (*The Soul of Man*, Lo. 1912, p. 38) probably merely echo Arnold's »cultivated inaction» (*Culture and Anarchy*, Lo. 1869 p. 253); that »sweet simplicity» (Wilde, *Reviews*, Libr. ed. Lo. 1908, p. 128), if not actually an Arnoldian phrase, looks very much like one; and that there can be no doubt whatever as to the origin of the phrase, the *grand style*, in,— »The classical drama is an imaginative, poetic art, which requires the grand style for its interpretation, and produces its effects by the most ideal means.» (*Reviews*,

p. 72.)¹⁾ This epigram, too,—»... as for the hundred or more parallel passages which Mr. Wyke Bayliss solemnly prints side by side, most of them are like parallel lines and never meet.» (*Reviews*, p. 404), recalls a less neatly turned passage in Arnold's *Last Words on Translating Homer*: — »These two impressions... can, practically, never be accurately compared; they are, and must remain, like those lines we read of in Euclid, which, though produced ever so far, can never meet.» Lastly, because it is really so suggestive, it should perhaps be mentioned that out of the numerous quotations from other writers that occur in Wilde's essays, some, at least, were made at second-hand, being in reality reminiscences of, or requotations from Arnold. »Ordinary people are 'terribly at ease in Zion.'» (*Int.* p. 154), reproduces the same phrase in *Culture and Anarchy* (p. 151), there quoted from hearsay and attributed to Carlyle. Two other quotations,—one from Spinoza, the other from Dante,—in *Intentions* (p. 168) and *De Profundis* (p. 49) respectively, to the effect that sorrow »is a passage to a lesser perfection,» and, conversely, that »'sorrow re-marries us to God,'» are both in Arnold (*Ess. Crit.* pp. 265, 266), apparently of his own translation, and the immediate source of those in Wilde.

The weightiest as also the most extensive portion of Wilde's chief work in criticism is thus seen to be steeped in memories of Arnold, and, in its capacity of a contribution to a theory of aesthetic criticism, essentially proceeds from data furnished by Arnold's paper on »The Function of Criticism,» —however much, in its ultimate issue, it may be found to deviate from them.²⁾ To fail to see this is, then, to miss the

¹⁾ [The Greeks] »are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the *grand style*,» Arnold, *Poems* (1853, Preface). — »...the *Iliad* has a great master's genuine stamp, and that stamp is the *grand style*.» Arnold, *On Translating Homer* (1861), etc.

²⁾ It need hardly be pointed out that Wilde is here fighting on common ground with Pater. Wilde's theory of the imaginative criticism as an

very point of its argument, quite irrespective of our capability of arriving at an unprejudiced estimate of the literary merits of the piece. And this, we are entitled to conclude from what precedes, is the case, more or less, with certain of his other essays also. Now what has been stated here with regard to Wilde's standpoint as an aesthetic critic will prove, on a comparative examination of his prose-style, as such, to be equally true of that. For such an examination I have no doubt will give for its result that in his methods of handling language, as far as his prose-essays are concerned. Wilde was as much under the influence of Arnold as in his attitude towards Criticism. This I will try to show by pointing out a number of syntactic and other peculiarities of Wilde's prose-style, the development of which I think may be partly set down to such an influence. Only, as it is much easier to establish a community of intellectual sympathies between two writers, or to trace back to a possible source of inspiration, or discover parallels to some neatly defined theory or other, than to account for analogies of diction or word-order in a writer the very essence of whose character is defined in the statement that he was at once original and extremely susceptible to influences, I shall hardly be expected to do much more here than throw out some suggestions, or hazard a plausible conjecture now and then, — rather than venture on positive assertions, or pretend to offer the definitive explanation of things.

It was a matter of course that, as an artistic and ornate essay-writer, Wilde should create for himself in language a medium on the whole very different from what Arnold found to be an adequate vehicle for his thoughts,—the thoughts,

art, quintessential and final, outside and above the arts proper, may, on the whole, stand for a paradoxical and exaggerated representation of Pater's attitude towards Criticism as depicted, e. g., in the Preface to the *L. naissance*.

say, of a work like *Culture and Anarchy* or of the *Essays in Criticism*. The prose of Arnold, we have seen, in its general features was decidedly of a normal and average type, though wrought to the highest level of perfection attainable in its kind. It had all the qualities (with the faults of most of them) that go to make up what is generally understood by a good prose-style, —it had truth, sincerity, clearness, order. It was an excellent instrument, if ever there was one, for sound and useful teaching, in every high and honest sense of these words. But it was not an artistic and literary prose, as Wilde's was, or, at least, it was not very often or very eminently that. Arnold, as Swinburne points out somewhere, »if justly judged, must be judged by his verse and not by his prose.» As a poet, he was wholly delightful. As a writer of prose he aimed at truth and adequacy of expression in the first place, at *beauty* of expression in the second only. Being mainly preoccupied with inquiring into the reasonable and moral nature of things, and making them appear under a moral and reasonable aspect, he naturally came to see in limpidity and clearness the chief merits and essential requirements of a style adapted mainly for such a purpose, and to secure these was apt, both by temperament and by conscious striving, to sacrifice any beauty of style and delicacy of phrasing supposed to be irreconcileable with them. He carried austerity to the point of absolute bareness, and, shy of anything that was likely to impair a clear, unambiguous, and straightforward presentation of facts, bade fair to dispense altogether with the luxury of image and metaphor. His weaker pages (and there are hundreds of them) are dreadfully dull and colourless. Even take one of his justly famous and really admirable passages, —the often cited apostrophe to Oxford, for instance, in the Preface to the *Essays in Criticism*, —and set it side by side with one of those marvellous pages in *Intentions* where

Dante's dream is made new and wonderful to us, and we retrace once more the steps of the Florentine through all the horrors of Hell, or one of those, more lovely still, it may be, in which the conditions of artistic creation in Greek days are set forth with such consummate magic of words, and charm of imaginative detail,—and see how its beauty grows slender, its graces fade away into a kind of pale refinement and anaemic elegance!

Presently these new ideas reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature. (*Ess. Crit.* p. 6).

It was the beginning of a great century for France, the seventeenth; men's minds were working, the French language was forming. (*Ibid.* p. 43)

A fit prose was a necessity; but it was impossible that a fit prose should establish itself amongst us without some touch of frost to the imaginative life of the soul. (*Ess. Crit. II*, p. 39).

Little things like these, which in any other writer would be passed by unnoticed, but in a page of Arnold's stand out with a semblance of life and freshness, may, on the whole, be said to be the nearest attempt he ever made, in prose, at a more graphic and figurative, and less abstract mode of writing. Nor had he the turn for picturesque exaggeration and humorous paradox. It was eminently characteristic of the man when he declared of himself, I forget where, that he »detested paradox.» Paradox, in fact, was utterly provocative to his sense of a fitness and true proportion in

things. I believe he never once wittingly made a paradox. A touch of sprightliness, now and then, some playful over-expression, on rare occasions, to accentuate some controversial statement, that is all. Then note the tinge of bookishness that lurks about that prose,—unwieldy Latinisms, eccentricities of word-order, curious inversions, in imitation, one would think at times, of the quaint seventeenth century language.¹⁾ When Arnold writes,—» . . a Catholicism . . freed from its sacerdotal despotism and freed from its pseudo-scientific apparatus of superannuated dogma.» (*Mixed Essays*, Lo. 1879, p. 121), just as Pater could write, in his most famous work,—» . . he is not beset at every turn by the inflexibilities and antagonisms of some well-recognised controversy, with rigidly defined opposites, exhausting the intelligence and limiting one's sympathies,» we must say that this is a style that bears too strong an imprint of the writer's intellectualism and habits of learned reading, and a style too dryly abstract and too closely packed with idioms of classical provenance to be thoroughly good English. How ungraceful, again, in spite of its slightly archaic flavour, is an inversion like the one exhibited in the following quotation:—»At epochs when new ideas are powerfully fermenting in a society, and profoundly changing its spirit, aristocracies, as they are in general not long suffered to guide it without question, so are they by nature not well fitted to guide it intelligently.» (*Mix. Ess.* p. 17).

The question now arises:—If this is so, how was it at all possible that such a prose as Arnold's, the general character of which I have tried to set forth above, could have had any attraction for a writer like Wilde? The answer may

¹⁾ I should have liked to quote here, had space allowed it, a passage in *Culture and Anarchy* (p. 219), beginning,—»And in those among us Philistines, &c. etc. It has something of the ponderous stateliness and intricate amplitude of a Taylor or a Milton.

be said to be involved in the fact that on all those points, whether with regard to sentence-structure or phraseology, where such an influence can be indicated with some certainty, Arnold's manner is eminent for its emphasis and clearness. I do not say that these were the qualities that Wilde most admired in Arnold. He may not even have been aware himself that he owed anything to Arnold, in a mere technical way, beyond a few borrowings or some casual reminiscences. But I do say that this was really the connecting link between them, as writers of prose, and that but for a natural incapacity for haze and ambiguousness, common to both, and a tendency, equally strong in either, towards clearness of utterance, Arnold could not have exercised any kind of formative or modifying influence on the prose-style of Wilde. Now, as for the latter, to be clear and brilliant was a thing that partook of the very essence of his genius. No affluence of imagery, no profusion of ornament, could quite obfuscate that brilliancy of his, or even sensibly blur it. The least thing he wrote has a curious effulgence or brightness about it that comes from within, and is there always, irrespective of tone or manner or phraseology. Whether couched in a style simple as in *De Profundis*, or in the overloaded and »precious» phrasing of *Intentions*, his thought stands out with the same clearness of moulding and sharply defined outlines. In art, I think he says somewhere, in a phrase adapted from Swinburne, being articulate is everything. The secret of his own success as a writer lies greatly in his uncompromising observance and faultless application, under any conditions of workmanship, of that rule or doctrine. Arnold, if less brilliant, had as much of clearness as he had, —a clearness pellucid and limpid as of placid lake-water, emitting no dazzling radiance but suffused with a mellow and softened light. Indeed, this quality of transparency or limpidity, as it was a necessity with him

intellectually, and profoundly conditioned all his thinking, so in a way it may be said to sum up the merits of his prose-style, imparting to even such of his works as in other respects were partial failures, some kind of literary interest.

This »natural light of mind,« this desire for clearness, manifests itself both in Wilde and in Arnold in a general preference for direct propositions, for successive and progressive statements,—all the more intricate modes of periphrasis and inversion being, *as a rule*, avoided,¹⁾—in a frequent use of the balanced construction, or parallelism, very often conjoined with contrast or antithesis (in Wilde more so than in Arnold), in a constant repetition of words and phrases (and here Arnold takes precedence of Wilde) with a view to emphasis, or for the purpose of knitting together more firmly a succession of sentences; finally, in the placing of certain qualifying adjuncts *after* and not, as usual, before the words qualified. In the following pages I have tried to bring out, under these heads, a number of marked points of resemblance between the two writers. The quotations from Wilde

1) Not that Wilde did always express himself in very brief or very simple sentences. It sometimes amused him to reproduce the manner of Ruskin, at other times that of Pater, neither of which is conspicuous for its simplicity. And of course he knew as well as anybody that variety can no more be dispensed with in sentence-structure than in the matter of vocabulary, figurative embellishments, and the like. Generally speaking, however, I should say his periods are neither very long nor remarkably complex. The same,—with restrictions,—may be said of Arnold. In all his books, especially the less good ones,—that is to say, broadly considered, those not devoted, entirely or in part, to literary criticism,—there will be found quite a number of intolerably long and artificially twisted periods. Apart from such, however, and an occasional plethora of cumbersome Latinisms, his diction and his methods of syntactic arrangement leave little to be desired in point of clearness and intelligibility. As Mr. G. K. Chesterton says, in his amusing and clever little book, *The Victorian Age in Literature*:— »He did not mind how elaborately long he made a sentence, so long as he made it clear.«

are all from his essays, his other prose-works being, of course, hardly of a nature to be compared, from any point of view, with those of Arnold. Of Arnold's works, six in all have been quoted from, including his best-known volumes of literary, political, theological, or miscellaneous criticism. I may premise also that of the modes of construction or diction exemplified not one is of rare occurrence; the merely curious or exceptional I have left out altogether.

First, then, as regards sentence-structure and word-order. Take the following passage in the *Essays in Criticism*:—

Pompeii was a sign that for humanity at large the measure of sensualism had been over-passed; St. Francis's doubt was a sign that for humanity at large the measure of spiritualism had been over-passed (p. 206).

Or either of these two in the Second Series of the *Essays in Criticism*:—

Born in the same year with Milton, Gray would have been another man; born in the same year with Burns, he would have been another man (p. 92).

A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against *life*, a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards *life*. (p. 144).

Or, again, this (*Ibid.* p. 251):—

The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley's poetry is not entirely sane either.

In all these, with slight variations, we have the same mode of structure: a parallel construction of two independent sentences put in antithetical and epigrammatic balance, with repetition of words or phrases. In each instance, the same thing substantially might no doubt have been expressed in half a dozen other ways. But one does not see how any of these possible renderings would bear comparison, in respect of efficiency and clearness, with the actual one. Now, this form of sentence-structure, very frequent in Arnold, and highly characteristic, occurs no less often in Wilde; almost any page of his essays might be turned up for instances of exactly the same type as the above:—

... he who does not love art in all things does not love it at all, and he who does not need art in all things does not need it at all. (*Essays and Lectures*, p. 150).

To Plato, with his passion for wisdom, this was the noblest form of energy. To Aristotle, with his passion for knowledge, this was the noblest form of energy also. (*Int.* p. 170).

Science is out of the reach of morals, for her eyes are fixed upon eternal truths. Art is out of the reach of morals, for her eyes are fixed upon things beautiful and immortal and ever-changing. (*Ibid.* p. 192).

If they saw the beauties [in Shakespeare], they would not object to the development of the drama; and if they saw the defects, they would not object to the development of the drama either. (*Soul of Man*, p. 48).

This parallelism, in point of grammar, may be modified in various ways. It may be formed, as in the following examples from Arnold, by a complex sentence of two groups, one of the groups being a comparative clause introduced by *as, just as*.

A thousand arguments may be discovered in favour of inequality, just as a thousand arguments may be discovered in favour of absolutism. (*Mix. Ess.* p. VII).

They who 'seek the Eternal,' and they who 'follow after righteousness,' were identical; just as, conversely, they who 'fear the Eternal,' and they who 'depart from evil,' were identical. (*Lit. and Dogma*, p. 123).

... our friends, the philosophical Liberals, are not slow to call this, too, a degrading superstition, just as Protestants call the doctrine of the Mass a degrading superstition. (*Ibid.* p. 305).

... as the Jews were always talking about the Messiah, so they were always talking, we know, about God. (*Ibid.* p. 221).

... to use Spinoza's denial of final causes in order to identify him with the Coryphæi of atheism, is to make a false use of Spinoza's denial of final causes, just as to use his assertion of the all-importance of loving God to identify him with the saints, would be to make a false use of his assertion of the all-importance of loving God. (*Ess. Crit.* p. 268).

In these instances, picked out at random, the form of the grammatical construction differs a little from that exemplified in those given above. Here, too, however, there is the characteristic combination of balance, contrast, and repetition of phrase (the latter pushed to an extreme never met with in Wilde). The emphasis is attained in practically the same way, only that, the two members of the parallelism being conjoined syntactically, the antithesis comes out, perhaps, a trifle less sharply.¹⁾ Quite an array of examples of much the same pattern may be drawn from Wilde's essays.

[the Greeks] invented the criticism of art just as they invented the criticism of everything else. (*Int.* p. 112).

.. just as the philanthropist is the nuisance of the ethical sphere, so the nuisance of the intellectual sphere is the man who is so occupied in trying to educate others, that he has never had any time to educate himself. (*Ibid.* p. 180).

When Jesus talks about the poor he simply means personalities, just as when he talks about the rich he simply means people who have not developed their personalities. (*Soul of Man*, p. 23).

It is always twilight in one's cell, as it is always twilight in one's heart. (*De Prof.* p. 23).

Parallelism, with epigrammatic point and climax, and repetition as before, there is again, on a slightly varied prin-

¹⁾ Note the insertion of modifiers, as *conversely* in the second quotation, or *we know* in the fourth: this tends to blunt a little the epigrammatic point. These modifiers are generally avoided by Wilde.

ciple of syntactic combination, in the following passages:—

Not only had Shelley dealings with money-lenders, he now had dealings with bailiffs also. (*Ess. Crit.* II, p. 232).

In this vigorous performance Dryden has to say, what is interesting enough, that] not only in poetry did Mrs. Killigrew excel, but she excelled in painting also. (*Ibid.* pp. 97—98).

[We shall recognise him in his place, as we recognise Shakespeare and Milton; and] not only we ourselves shall recognise him, but he will be recognised by Europe also. (*Ibid.* p. 134.)

The last-quoted passage, but for a certain baldness of phrasing, might have been written by Wilde. In the next-foregoing one, on the other hand, the words bracketed may serve as a specimen of that perfectly mediocre phrasing in which Arnold himself very often »did excel.» The similarity between these passages and the following ones is obvious.

... not merely the beauty that men look at, but the beauty that men listen to also. (*Int.* p. 147).

... the sixteenth century was not merely the age of Vitruvius; it was the age of Vecellio also. (*Ibid.* pp. 239—240).

Finally there occurs, now and then, in Arnold a sort of parallel construction formed by two subordinate clauses in antithetical balance,—each expressing the justification, or

development, of an idea conveyed by a preceding adjective, —with the usual iteration of phrase:—

... it is evident... both how important a thing conduct is, and how simple a thing. Important, because it covers so large a portion of human life, and the portion common to all sorts of people; simple, because, though there needs perpetual admonition to form conduct, the admonition is needed, etc. (*Lit. and Dogma*, p. 17).

They have thus become, in a certain sense, of all people the most inaccessible to ideas and the most impatient of them; inaccessible to them, because of their want of familiarity with them; and impatient of them because they have got on so well without them, etc. (*Ess. Crit.* p. 159).

Here, too, we may trace an analogy with Wilde, which is interesting, seeing the unusual character of this construction:—

It is at once too easy and too difficult to be a popular novelist. It is too easy, because the requirements of the public... are within the reach of the very meanest capacity and the most uncultivated mind. It is too difficult, because to meet such requirements the artist would have to do violence to his temperament, etc. (*Soul of Man*, p. 45). —

It is a well-known principle of rhetoric that by placing a word, or group of words, or a whole sentence, in any position but the regular or ordinary one, we may bring it into prominence and emphasize it. This method of inverting

the normal order, for the purpose of emphasis, was quite a favourite device with Arnold, as shown by the examples quoted below. In some of these instances, the inversion is certainly quite correct, though probably most other writers would have preferred the post-adjunct order; as in,—».. the churches cannot .. conceive the Bible without the gloss they at present put upon it . . .» (*Lit. and Dogma*, p. IX), or in,—».. that there is here any contradiction or mistake, some do deny.» (*Ibid.* p. 138), or in,—»We have seen that some new treatment or other the religion of the Bible certainly seems to require . . .» (*Ibid.* p. 116). Nor, perhaps, since strong emphasis is wanted, could exception be taken to such inversions as,—».. without knowledge of the facts, no clearness or fairness of mind can in any study do anything;» (*Ibid.* p. XXIV), or,—»On this Bible dogma if Churches were founded, and to preach this Bible dogma if ministers were ordained,» etc. (*Ibid.* p. 288). In the next four instances, however, the order strikes one as very quaint, and the emphasis as being wrongly placed:—».. those from whom we take what we now in theology most want . . .» (*Ibid.* p. XXVIII). —».. an idea .. from which we might proceed to argue and to make inferences, with the certainty that .. the basis on which we were going everyone knew and granted.» (*Ibid.* pp. 11—12).—».. Parliamentary Liberalism [will and must long mean this] that the Barbarians should pass away, .. and that into their heritage the Philistine should enter.» (*Cult. and An.* p. 269).—Yet another step, and we enter the domain of sheer eccentricity, as in,—».. it was an extraordinary novelty .. when this identification was by Jesus boldly made.» (*Lit. and Dogma*, p. 218).—».. the turbid *Aberglaube* .. was by the disciples of Jesus borrowed, and transferred wholesale to Christ and Christ's future advent.» (*Ibid.* pp. 224—225).—».. I again take myself

as a sort of *corpus vile* to serve for illustration in a matter where serving for illustration may not by every one be thought agreeable . . . » (*Cult. and An* p. 106). This sort of inversion departs, of course, from the ordinary usage, and instances will certainly be seldom met with in modern English prose outside of Arnold. As used by the latter, it was probably meant to be emphatical, though originally, perhaps, suggested by the example of older writers. Of this unusual order there are, however, some instances in Wilde as well, and the possibility of a reminiscence would not seem to be quite excluded. Here is a brief passage in *The Soul of Man* (p. 75) describing the flight of Cellini from prison, where he had been put by the Pope: — » . . . crept out from tower to tower, and falling through dizzy air at dawn, maimed himself, and was by a vine-dresser covered with vine leaves, and carried in a cart to one who . . . had care of him. » As will appear from even this mutilated extract, the passage is couched in quite a different style from those just quoted, and the inversion is of course not in the nature of an emphasis, but was probably adopted either because of its quaintness, as a means of heightening the poetic flavour of the expression, or simply on the ground that the collocation of *vine leaves* and *vine-dresser* would have yielded a somewhat disagreeable effect. The likeness with Arnold is a purely abstract one (if I may say so), being limited to the form of the construction. — Emphatic pre-order of adverbial adjunct, with inversion of predicate, there is in, — » . . . an amount of useful information from which never, even in his most meditative moments, can he thoroughly free himself. » (*Int.* pp. 6—7). This is a type of frequent occurrence both in Wilde and in Arnold. Cf. » It gives him lessons which nowhere else from an Englishman's work can he obtain . . . » (*Mis Ess.* p. 268). — In the following passages: — » . . . a painter is limited, not to what he sees in nature, but to what upon canvas may be

seen.» (*Int.* p. 148). — » . . . out of ourselves we can never pass, nor can there be in creation what in the creator was not.» (*Ibid.* p. 184), the inverted order is also the emphatic order, and so far both passages may be said to convey some suggestion of the modes of inversion particularly affected by Arnold. It should be observed, however, that in both, the words are placed in *cross-order*, an arrangement which, like all similar devices, has for its aim intensification of diction by the avoidance of the regular and the commonplace. And this order, curiously enough, is as rare in Arnold as it is frequent in Wilde,—so rare, indeed, that one is tempted to note, as mere exceptions, the few instances that actually occur, such as, — »Difficult, certainly, is the right reading of the Bible, and true culture, too, is difficult.» (*Lit. and Dogma*, p. XXXII). —

It may seem a trite observation that one of the most prominent characteristics of Arnold's prose-style, and certainly the one that most tended to impair its fine quality, was his trick of repeating, with absolute recklessness, whole clusters of words and phrases. He had a knack of going on mouthing and playing upon a phrase page up and page down that was little short of a mania, and a method of »crying his text like a hawker» (to quote one critic) that could be extremely exasperating. Someone has pointed out that this was not always so, but that this tendency, although traceable from the very first, was chiefly a feature of his later work. Thus, in the *Essays* of 1865, there is a good deal of that »hammer-play,» as it has been called, but not enough of it by far to spoil, or even perceptibly to affect, the thorough soundness of that admirable prose; while in those written about 1880 (and re-edited, together with others, in 1888 as a Second Series of *Essays in Criticism*) it is a constant source of irritation, and whole pages and paragraphs are absolutely disfigured by it. Of course, repetition, as long as not suffer-

ed to degenerate into mere mannerism or caricature, is an excellent means of emphasis,—so much so, indeed, that it has been called »the strongest generator of emphasis known to language;»¹⁾ and of course there *are* occasions when not to repeat, and even repeat on a very large scale, will be simply to miss one's point, and to lose in effectiveness what may be gained in variety of phrase. To borrow an illustration from a writer whose method on this point forms a contrast to that of Arnold or of Wilde:—when E. A. Poe writes somewhere,—»Just as the Intellect concerns itself with Truth, so Taste informs us of the Beautiful, while the Moral Sense is regardful of Duty,» a reader whose interest is easily engrossed by technicalities of style will, perhaps, find that the contrivance of using a different predicate in each of the three members of this period, by the mere fact of variety being thus obviously and a little laboriously sought after, is apt to divert his attention from what is the really important point here, *viz.*, the difference stated to exist between the three several faculties of the mind and between their respective »objects.» An instance of felicitous repetition, on the other hand, we have in: »Other poets with a like liberty do not attain to the fluidity of Chaucer; Burns himself does not attain to it.» (*Ess. Crit.* II, p. 31). The iteration of the word *attain* seems a comparatively small matter; yet, it is easy to see, half the secret of the thing lies there. In the following quotation from Wilde, repetition is used with a no less subtle feeling for the effects to be derived from it:—»The honest man is to sit quietly [at the theatre], and know the delightful emotions of wonder, curiosity, and suspense. He is not to go to the play to lose a vulgar temper. He is to go to the play to realise an artistic temperament. He is to go to the play to gain an artistic temperament.» (*Soul of Man*, pp. 66—67). In this passage in

¹⁾ Prof. W. Raleigh, in a suggestive little volume, *Style* (Lo. 1908).

Essays in Criticism (p. 14), it has been aptly combined with antithesis and climax: — »It does not hurt him [Burke] that Dr. Price and the Liberals were enraged with him; it does not even hurt him that George the Third and the Tories were enchanted with him.» For, »it does not even hurt him.» insert »nor even,» or some such words, and the effect will be spoilt altogether. However, this method of repetition may easily be employed to an undue extent, as often in Arnold,—witness, for instance, the following two passages, which, if retouched with a view to some more variety of expression and a slight toning down of statement, one might think would have produced a better effect, without losing much in clearness:— »... those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this country at any rate are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently ...» (*Ess. Crit.* pp. 18—19).— »His poetry transcends and effaces, easily and without effort, all the romance-poetry of Catholic Christendom; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry contemporary with it, it transcends and effaces all the English poetry subsequent to it down to the age of Elizabeth.» (*Ess. Crit.* II, pp. 31—32).—A form of iteration that is probably peculiar to Arnold may be illustrated by another couple of quotations:— »Ideas cannot be too much prized in and for themselves, cannot be too much lived with.» (*Ess. Crit.* p. 12).— »... he lived with the great poets, he lived, above all, with the Greeks... ; and he caught their poetic point of view for regarding life, caught their poetic manner.» (*Ess. Crit.* II. p. 42). It is, perhaps, not very easy to suggest the right word of criticism for this sort of thing. There is nothing that is downright bad in the phrasing of either passage. But I think it may be said that, instead of adding to the force or energy of the expression, the

repetition of the predicate, by bringing in a kind of unpleasant swing, rather deprives it, in some measure, of both.

In some of the above passages, the use of repetition is, at least, admissible, though for one reason or another one may like it less in some instances than in others, or even not like it at all. Now, for a contrast, read this! »The needful qualities for a fit prose are regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. The men of letters, whose destiny it may be to bring their nation to the attainment of a fit prose, must of necessity... give a predominating, an almost exclusive attention to the qualities of regularity, uniformity, precision, balance.» (*Ess. Crit.* II, p. 39). How frightfully rigid that is, how quite devoid of fluidity and suppleness and the breath of life! Or, again, take this passage in *Literature and Dogma* (p. 25):—»... the first man who... controlled the native, instantaneous, mechanical impulses of the instinct of self-preservation, controlled the native, instantaneous, mechanical impulses of the reproductive instinct, had morality revealed to him.» The same stiffly articulated sentences, here, the same array of unwieldy learned locutions. I shall not quote here that famous paragraph on Burns, in »The Study of Poetry» (*Ess. Crit.* II, p. 44), with its tedious and tasteless harping on »Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners.» The following passages, if less glaring, may stand as equally representative of this irritating habit.

It is not the French aristocracy and professions, it is the whole French middle class, which is astonished at the pleasures of the gay and pleasure-seeking portion of our middle class. It is not the French aristocracy and professions, it is the whole French middle class, which is astonished at the hideousness and immense ennui of the life of the graver portion. (*Mix. Ess.* p. 168).

If this is bad, what can be said in favour of,—

All organ like the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, . . . existing, it may be said, as just an organ for a free play of the mind, we have not; but we have the *Edinburgh Review*, existing as an organ of the Whigs, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the *Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the Tories, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the *British Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the political Dissenters, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have, etc. (*Ess. Crit.* pp. 19—20)?

or, still more, of the following,—

What is freedom but machinery? what is population but machinery? what is coal but machinery? what are railroads but machinery? what is wealth but machinery? what are religious organisations but machinery? (*Cult. and An.* p. 16).

Very sad, and, no doubt, very true. Only it is a pity that these mournful reflections should be conveyed in a language eminently fit to impress one with a sense of the mechanicalness as much of the prose of Mr. Matthew Arnold as of any other mundane thing.

Now, the fact is that Wilde indulged himself nearly as freely in the use of repetition as Arnold did, and it seems probable that on this point as well he was influenced by the example of the latter. Only with Wilde it never became invested with that absurdly exaggerated character it assumed so often in Arnold. More keenly alive to the sensuous

beauty of words, and endowed with a surer instinct of artistic refinement, he rarely committed any of those blunders of taste of which Arnold was sometimes guilty. For instance, that strange paragraph in *The Soul of Man*, beginning,— »There are three kinds of despots,» etc. (pp. 73—76), for all its artificiality has a charm and significance all its own,—a beauty not unlike that of some finely built-up poem, its sharply divided members partaking somewhat of the character of stanzas, while certain words thrice repeated, in an ominous and solemn strain like an incantation, might in a way stand for the burden. These lines, too, are noteworthy as affording another example of the same trichotomy (*Ibid.* p. 77): —

... the past is of no importance. The present is of no importance. It is with the future that we have to deal. For the past is what man should not have been. The present is what man ought not to be.
The future is what artists are.

One would not say that either of these instances suggests what might be taken as forming the essential element of Arnold's method of repetition: a peculiar stiffness of movement and monotony of sound, inseparable from the recurrence, within restrained limits of space, of clumsy and complex phrases and long rows of words,—and *what* words sometimes! An approach to Arnold's »least fine mode» there is, however, in the following two passages in *The Soul of Man*, which, but for an aphoristic terseness of phrase and sentence, would have offered a fairly close analogy with certain of those quoted from Arnold: —

Up to the present man has hardly cultivated sympathy at all. He has merely sympathy with pain, and

sympathy with pain is not the highest form of sympathy. All sympathy is fine, but sympathy with suffering is the least fine mode. (p. 82).

Every man must be left quite free to choose his own work. No form of compulsion must be exercised over him. If there is, his work will not be good for him, will not be good in itself, and will not be good for others. (p. 14).

Much more strongly we are reminded of Arnold in a number of other passages, in the same essay and elsewhere, all of which will afford ample illustration of the various devices of style that have been noted in the foregoing as characteristic of the manner of both Wilde and Arnold: antithesis, parallelism, climax, and repetition: —

They find themselves surrounded by hideous poverty, by hideous ugliness, by hideous starvation. (*Soul of Man*. p. 2).

[Private property] has debarred one part of the community from being individual by starving them. It has debarred the other part of the community from being individual by putting them on the wrong road, and encumbering them. (*Ibid.* p. 17).

Art is the most intense mode of Individualism that the world has known. I am inclined to say that it is the only real mode of Individualism that the world has known. (*Ibid.* p. 41).

[the modern world] proposes to do away with poverty and the suffering that it entails. It desires to

get rid of pain, and the suffering that pain entails. (*Ibid.* p. 89).

[The new Individualism] will be what the Greeks sought for, but could not, except in Thought, realise completely, because they had slaves, and fed them; it will be what the Renaissance sought for, but could not realise completely except in Art, because they had slaves, and starved them. (*Ibid.* p. 90).

What lies before me is my past. I have got to make myself look on that with different eyes, to make God look on it with different eyes. (*De Prof.* p. 118).

To a little child, whether he is in prison on remand or after conviction is not a subtlety of social position he can comprehend. To him the horrible thing is to be there at all. In the eyes of humanity it should be a horrible thing for him to be there at all. (*Ibid.* p. 128).¹⁾

I do not say that the influence exhibited in the above examples is by any means of an obtrusive kind. My contention is simply that there the thing is, however much disguised by other facts, of equal, or greater, prominence to the general reader, and though we are not always able actually to establish parallels. This, however, we may do sometimes, as between the following four passages, with regard to which I might add just this, that in the two quotations from Wilde, the repetition is properly restrained to the words in

¹⁾ This quotation is from a Letter to the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, May 28, 1897, reprinted in the *De Profundis* volume with the title, «The Case of Warder Martin: Some Cruelties of Prison Life.»

emphasis, whereas in the second from Arnold it embraces also,—and less correctly,—the unstressed phrase, *a passion*.

... the very essential characteristic of his poetry is ... an extreme subtlety and curious elaborateness of thought, an extreme subtlety and curious elaborateness of expression. (Arnold, *On Translating Homer*, Lo. Routledge, N. D. p. 274).

The truth is that 'the yearning passion for the Beautiful,' which was with Keats, as he himself truly says, the master-passion, is not a passion of the sensuous or sentimental man, is not a passion of the sensuous or sentimental poet. It is an intellectual and spiritual passion. (*Ess. Crit.* II, p. 115).

One might point out how the Renaissance was great because it... suffered the individual to develop freely, beautifully, and naturally, and so had great and individual artists, and great and individual men. (*Soul of Man*, p. 76).

[The first volume of Poems that in the very spring-tide of his manhood a young man sends forth to the world] should not be burdened by the weight of a terrible and revolting tragedy; a terrible revolting scandal. (*De Prof.* p. 27). —

Before concluding, I would mention a few other points of minor significance, a consideration of which may yet not inappropriately come within the bounds of the present study, inasmuch as they tend to substantiate, in their way, the case I have endeavoured to make out above. I would not dwell upon mere trifles, such as a casual similarity in the

use of what has been termed the »intensive» adverbs, of such a word, for example, as *absolutely*, quite a prominent one in Wilde's vocabulary, and one that goes equally well with the emphaticial, assertive, and somewhat dogmatic manner of Arnold. If *Gilbert*'s humorous remark, in »The Critic as Artist,» that listening to the conversation of someone older than oneself is »always a dangerous thing to do,» and one that, if allowed to degenerate into a habit, will prove »absolutely fatal to any intellectual development,» recalls somehow another statement, not at all humorous, once made by Arnold, to the effect that »Goethe's profound, imper-
turbable naturalism is absolutely fatal to all routine thinking,» it really does not matter whether we put the thing down to some vague reminiscence, or whether we look upon it as a mere coincidence. Take, however, some such passage as,—» . . . through the method, secret, and sweet reasonableness of Jesus, and only through these, we get at righteousness.» (*Lit. and Dogma* p. 265), or,—»This, and this alone, is the scope of the following essay.» (*Cult. and An.* p. VIII), or any of these,—»It is through Art, and through Art only, that we can realise our perfection; through Art, and through Art only that we can shield ourselves from the sordid perils of actual existence.» (*Int.* p. 168),—»The æsthetic critic, and the æsthetic critic alone, can appreciate all forms and modes.» (*Ibid.* p. 206).—The mode of emphasis exemplified in these quotations may probably be said to belong to literary English generally, but in individual writers, if used beyond a certain extent, it may of course become inherent in their style as a mannerism, and strike one as somewhat peculiar,—as in the case of both Wilde and Arnold. It hardly seems fanciful to conjecture that the example of the latter was instrumental in developing a similar predilection in Wilde. I subjoin a few other instances from the works of both.

... this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone. (Arnold, *Poems*, Lo. 1853, p. XII).

To this extent, and to this only, we are brought at moments into collision with miracles... (*Lit. and Dogma*, p. 249).

What then is civilisation... which is really so complex and vast a matter that a great spiritual power, like literature, is a part of it, and a part only? (*Mix. Ess.* p. VI).

Through constant change, and through constant change alone, he will find his true unity. (*Int.* p. 191).

... the secrets of life and death belong to those, and those only, whom the sequence of time affects... (*Ibid.* p. 136).

He gains his inspiration from form, and from form purely, as an artist should. (*Ibid.* p. 201).

Art, and art only, can make archaeology beautiful. (*Ibid.* p. 239).

... a really artistic production should bear the impress of one master, and one master only... (*Ibid.* p. 260).

Finally let me add a few notes on yet another point of diction where there is again some analogy noticeable between the two men,—the placing, for the purpose of emphasis

or euphony, of the adverb *also* (in preference to the synonymous *too*, which occurs much more rarely) at the end of a sentence, where another order would have been equally possible, or even, in ordinary written language, the usual one; as in, — ».. when Art is more varied, Nature will, no doubt, be more varied also.» (*Int.* p. 41). — » It was in reality a scene not merely perfect in its picturesqueness, but absolutely dramatic also...» (*Ibid.* p. 239). — » .. one who is not comely to look on, because Beauty is a joy; one who is not in fair raiment because that may be a joy also.» (*Soul of Man*, p. 87). — ».. I see in Christ not merely the essentials of the supreme romantic type, but all the accidents, the wilfulnesses even, of the romantic temperament also.» (*De Prof.* p. 85). I have suggested that this practice, which was almost as stringently observed by another writer from whom Wilde derived a great deal, Pater, may have been due in some degree to the influence of the latter. It is, however, just as likely that in this case we ought rather to look to Arnold for a possible precedent, the order preferred by Wilde being also the one generally adopted by that writer: —

These feelings are permanent and the same; that which interests them is permanent and the same also. (*Poems*, 1853, p. X).

.. he keeps watch over himself both that the great springs of action may be right in him, and that the minute details of action may be right also. (*Ess. Crit.* p. 289).

Gray's poetry was not only stinted in quantity by reason of the age wherein he lived, it suffered somewhat in quality also. (*Ess. Crit.* II, p. 94).

... the genius of the English nation is greater than the genius of any individual, greater even than Shakespeare's genius, for it includes the genius of Newton also. (*Mix. Ess.* p. 46).

... righteousness, the central object of Israel's concern, was the central object of Christ's concern also. (*Lit. and Dogma*, pp. 84—85).

This is the case with the metaphysics of our bishops, and it will be the same with M. Burnouf's new metaphysics also. (*Ibid.* p. 122). —

No attempt has been made above at determining the literary relationship of Arnold and Wilde from a chronological or genetic point of view. Speaking broadly however, I suppose it would not be very wide of the truth to say that the influence of Arnold is virtually *nil* in Wilde's earliest prose-writings; that in all his critical work dating from his best period, that is to say, from the years 1889—1891, especially in the chief parts of *Intentions*, it forms an essential element of inspiration, and that after the catastrophe of his imprisonment, and in the only important record left us of his intellectual experiences during that time, *De Profundis*, it abated again,—in about the same measure, presumably, as other literary influences, excepting that of the Bible, would seem to have been pushed aside, obliterated, or forgotten in those dark years of his life.¹⁾ No shade of doubt but that, asserting itself along with the more obvious in-

¹⁾ Though it is interesting to note the fact, as stated by one who is, perhaps, better entitled to pronounce an opinion on these matters than any other person, that Wilde »after his imprisonment retained his admiration for Arnold, at least as a prose writer,» whereas he thought Arnold's poetry »too literary and too studied.» (Mr. Robert Ross, in a letter to myself).

fluences of the moment, the influence of Matthew Arnold for quite a long time meant to him a great incentive to intellectual and literary excitation. To prove this, was indeed the acknowledged object of this essay. And yet that object would have missed its mark had it failed to transmit at the same time an impression of how this influence of Arnold was persistently counterbalanced by deep racial, emotional, and I know not what hundreds of other divergencies, making together a chasm to be spanned by no mere sympathy of intellect, or reasoned admiration, or formal acceptance. And perhaps, after all, this is the note on which I would prefer to end.

It is of course true, in a sense, that Wilde, as Pater once asserted, in a review of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, »carries on, more perhaps than any other writer, the brilliant critical work of Matthew Arnold.» It is true in this sense, that no man of letters in his own generation was equipped for competing with him in his capacity of by far the most fascinating and highly-gifted aesthetic critic in England since the death of Arnold,—quite irrespective of whether, on the whole, his criticism was conducted on the same lines as Arnold's, and was essentially and primarily a continuation of that. And this, as far as I can see, it was not. How wide was the distance that separated the »decadent» and impressionist criticism of Wilde from Arnold's standpoint, both as expressed in general formulae and as, in each actual instance, it underlay and guided his estimate and judgments of things literary, may be adequately measured by bringing out against each other their respective attitudes towards that old crucial problem,—the relations of form and matter in a work of art. What can be more incongruous, in fact, what more suggestive of antagonisms deeper still, of divergencies of mind and temperament, of tendencies and aims, than Arnold expounding his doctrine,—as deduced from

the study of Greek poetry,—about »the all-importance of the choice of a subject; the necessity of accurate construction, and the subordinate character of expression.» (*Poems* 1853, Preface), and Wilde asserting flatly that »the real artist is he who proceeds, not from feeling to form, but from form to thought and passion,» and that »all bad poetry springs from genuine feeling,» or laying it down that »form is everything,» that »the very condition of any art is style? «¹⁾ This is by way of an instance merely, and to indicate one aspect of the thing; for this is not the place to go into the subject at any length. I will, then, conclude by a brief reference to what seems to me the real core of the matter. Arnold, even in ripened manhood, produced things of quite an inferior and commonplace character, just as his best essays include pages astonishingly void of refinement and spirit. Wilde, in Letters no less than in Life, bade fair to make true his boast that he never did anything that was not extraordinary. Whenever started on a theme or subject that was really congenial to him, he was up to himself throughout and thoroughly. His essays, no matter how crowded with echoes and borrowings, in their fastidious rejection of triviali-

¹⁾ Cf. Pater's dictum that »form, in the full signification of the term, is everything, and the mere matter nothing.« — As chance would have it, about the very same time that Wilde was publishing his articles on »The True Function and Value of Criticism« [*The Critic as Artist*], where the above-quoted passages occur, the most brilliant of contemporary French writers, M. Anatole France, in a *causerie* in the Paris paper, *Le Temps* (reprinted in 1892 in the fourth volume of *La Vie Littéraire*; v. p. 163), urged in terms no less definite than those of Wilde or Pater, the predominance in art, as its really creative element, of form over matter, of style over ideas. »Un esprit soucieux uniquement des lettres ...« he says, »sait qu'aucun homme ne peut se flatter raisonnablement de penser quelque chose qu'un autre homme n'ait pas déjà pensé avant lui ... Il sait ... qu'une idée ne vaut que par la forme et que donner une forme nouvelle à une vieille idée, c'est tout l'art, et la seule création possible à l'humanité.«

ties of phrase, and in their deliberate search for bold and startling combinations of thoughts, easily excel all attempts in a similar vein, in England or abroad, and possess »the dangerous and delightful distinction of being different from others.» His life and his work, if judged by what are their truly significant elements, were equally dominated by his personality and temperament. He himself was one of those artists the quality of whose work depends upon the intensification of personality. Arnold, on the other hand, was a man of very great abilities and admirable literary talent, a what might be called really first-class »all-round man,» who only just lacked a certain something, a touch of divine fieriness and freedom, to be quite a genius in one sense, at least, of that pregnant term. Well, that »something,» a spark of that divine incandescence and fine exultancy in life's loveliness, I think Wilde possessed. As has been very well observed: »Genius has no greater enemy than cleverness.» Wilde's cleverness, though extraordinary, and though most wantonly exploited by himself, never quite managed to get the better of his genius.

their works is a regurgitation of ideas
↳ compare this in their pieces how ideas
are recycled, DaVinci, and also how
Pater is found in Wilde.

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